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BUCK NAVVIES.

BY H. R. JUKES.

IN these days of general debunking it might perhaps be unwise to suggest that romance still lingers about any particular class of men or work. Certainly to hint to the man himself that its attractive aura surrounded the average navvy of my everyday acquaintance would be to invite from that outspoken individual a remark as pointed as his own pick and about as reticently delicate as a steam-shovel.

And now, after ten years of intimate contact with him, I have no illusions either.

It all started in a little Yorkshire valley. I had been dodging about the country trying to find some place where I could make one lung—all that was left from the war—satisfactorily perform the work of two. My search after breathable air led me in the end to a tiny hillside village lying wide of one of the more renowned beauty spots of what is generally known, I believe, as the 'Dales Country.'

It was certainly a very lovely district, with the heathered moorlands just above, woodlands dotting the slopes, and all the lower levels a multi-coloured patchwork of waving meadow-grass and pasture. A little river, dodging impishly about among the trees, gave the dale its name. There was only one road, but a little semi-private railway, constructed by the Corporation of a distant city which had bought various local water rights, ran along the valley bottom. On ordinary days the infrequent passenger traffic was conveyed in a tiny autocar arrangement—locomotive and coach all in one—a most respectable, delightfully intimate turnout,

with a guard in uniform and everything. Once a week, however, on Saturdays, what was locally known as the 'Navvies' Special' ran; an express, from which all civilians were barred. This was a vastly different affair; a string of half a dozen pukka coaches, firsts, seconds and thirds (I found out afterwards they had been bought second-hand from a moribund railway now absorbed in the L.M.S.) and actually drawn by a real engine, sometimes two.

Certainly they were small, these locos, but they were pretty ancient and they made up in noise what they lacked in size. They racketed gaily along—clankety, clankety, clank, clank, clank—piping joyously in accordance with the instructions prominently displayed upon the 'Whistle' notice-boards at every level-crossing; jangling past the merely ordinary travellers waiting on the tiny wayside platforms (there were three of these) with all the lofty condescension somehow affected by most expresses; and finally pulling up with a series of spasmodic, nerve-shattering jolts alongside the single open platform of the terminus: I will call it Badgerley.

Then began the exodus. The 'Navvies' Special' decanted a heterogeneous horde of people upon the hitherto sleepy little market town. I term it a town by courtesy only; it was really just a village—one main street of little shops, several higgledy-piggledy rows of tiny cottages just planked down anywhere, a few larger houses towards the outskirts, a chapel or two, a church, a school, a police-station—all the usual amenities—and half a dozen inns.

The population of the place was immediately doubled; though this phenomenon was noticeable only for a little while. The train arrived barely a short half-hour before 'closing-time' at the various hostelries, and most of the

male passengers promptly disappeared into various cool interiors. The few womenfolk immediately got busy with their shopping; on the alert, no doubt, for any sudden juggling with the price tickets of the wares displayed caused by their arrival in the town.

It was a fiercely contested theme of argument, this. All the visitors from 'up top'—as dalehead, where these people lived, was termed—protested volubly that they were charged more for everything, groceries, meat, vegetables, than were the Badgerley natives; and even though good money was being earned by their menfolk, they saw no reason why it should go into the pockets of such, as I once heard them called, 'blood-sucking parasites' as the village tradesmen were deemed to be.

Towards three o'clock, when the gates of Paradise closed, there was a general trek of the male persuasion from the various houses of refreshment towards one or other of the three clubs in the town. A benevolent licensing bench had granted these convivial gathering grounds an extra hour's 'time'; a concession duly appreciated by the thirsty souls from up the dale, who, as soon as this advantage was discovered, promptly signed on as country members. There they stopped until the return train was due to pull out, at 5.20 I think it was.

This return train was a stirring sight. Every compartment seemed full to overflowing, and yet an apparently endless stream of passengers still continued to pour up the approach-way to the platform. A dozen tradesmen's hand-carts, together with one or two larger vehicles, were parked alongside, hurriedly discharging their contents into the two big goods vans at the rear of the train. Errand-boys, smothered in parcels, dashed hither and thither up the line of coaches, shrieking out in shrill, excited trebles 'Missis

So-and-so? Missis So-and-so?' in a frantic last-minute search for some discriminating customer or other, wise in her generation, who apparently preferred to have her more particular purchases directly under her eye. Youngsters howled or laughed or stolidly munched sweets. The engines blew off steam, their drivers and firemen dispassionately chewing tobacco as they hung over the sides of their cabs watching the *mêlée*. The guard moved agitatedly up and down, exhorting everybody to 'come on, come on,' and pulling out his watch half a dozen times a minute to glance despairingly at the unforgiving dial. When he had shepherded as many passengers as, even in his optimistic opinion, a compartment could possibly hold, he promptly locked them in. And when he had thus disposed of all his normal charges, the large surplus somehow invariably left over he folded to his bosom—literally, I should imagine—in his own van.

A last look round, a whistle, a cloud of steam, and—clankety clank—clankety clank—the train was off; headed, in a series of standing leaps, for that unknown bourne away up at the head of the dale.

Naturally I was interested. They were such a happy, carefree, healthy crowd; so tremendously alive. It bucked you up just to look at them. Somehow they seemed a race apart, different from any I had ever seen and appealing to me strangely. I met some of the men during those odd half-hours I mentioned. The little room of the inn would be quiet and dull and almost empty; perhaps just some old farmer or other and myself yarning over our ale. Suddenly the door would open and there would be an influx of huge, weather-beaten men, some few in ordinary suits, but most of them in corduroy and fustian, their faces shining and richly ingrained with that full-blooded network of little

veins which makes a man look as though he has just been shaved with a piece of glass.

They slid contentedly into place along the settees built in against the walls and with a casual flick or two of the wrist jerked the heavy iron tables into position. Judging by the landlord's demeanour they were favoured customers. 'Pint !' 'Pint !' 'Pint and a double !' 'Number Five !'—orders were many and varied.

The 'pints and doubles' appealed to me. It seemed a favourite combination. A double whisky, taken neat, and then a pint of beer as a chaser. It struck me as being a sound way to invoke the state of beatitude the consumer was evidently aiming at. Whisky by itself, though effective enough perhaps in creating atmosphere, would leave a certain amount of bulk unfilled. Beer alone would fill the gap but, with its milder alcoholic content, leave the possibly rather depressing state of world-affairs in much the same condition as it was before. Combining the two apparently worked well. In the two hours or so at his disposal my friend from 'up top' could get just nicely mellowed. I never saw one even slightly drunk. Perhaps there wasn't time. All the liquor seemed to do was perhaps to melt their inherent reserve a little. They might unbend enough to nod as they went out.

Big men, quiet, tremendously self-contained. Even between themselves they spoke but little. They spent their money royally. A double whisky was eighteenpence at that time, and a pint of beer—the beer they drunk, anyway—eightpence. Two and twopence a time. And they drank solemnly, steadily, and amazingly quickly. What they lived on up there I didn't know ; I imagined salt pork. But whatever it was, as a thirst-provider it was obviously great medicine.

Nobody in the town seemed to know very much about the work upon which these men were employed. A big reservoir was being built eleven miles away up among the moors at the head of the dale. A wild, uncouth country from what they said, though actually very few had ever been up ; but over and above that, there was very little information to be gleaned. Dalesfolk are apt to be a trifle reserved, too. Except in the way of business they did not consort much with these temporary neighbours. The two sharply contrasted types did not mix, that was all. Each, I suppose, in his heart despised the other. There were individual exceptions, I dare say, but I didn't meet any.

I came to look forward to these Saturdays. They did me good. My health had improved considerably and I found my single cylinder working quite passably well upon the varied assortment of airs the dale provided. Soon I could pass muster among the usual crowd.

But that was not enough—now ! The sight of those lusty fellows from 'up top' had changed all that. They had inspired me ; had shown me what health could really mean. Even in my fittest days I had never been like one of these.

They were still taking men on, I heard, from time to time as the work progressed ; navvies, mechanics, loco and crane drivers, platelayers—all manner of men. Surely, thought I, there must be some sort of executive job which even I might fill.

So I wrote for one, and got it.

The next Monday morning found me aboard the little autocar, bound for what, in the villagers' opinion, was Ultima Thule. I began to think they might be right, for I found that civilisation stopped at a little hamlet four miles short of my destination. The railway lines ran on ; I

could see them ; but beyond this point was apparently sacrosanct. No civilian transport, either by road or rail, was allowed without due authority. A pair of substantial gates, flung across both roadway and rail-track, as well as various notice-boards proclaimed the fact.

Inquiry from the one official at the tiny station elucidated the remark that a lorry from the works was actually in the yard, waiting to pick up some special stores which had been brought up on the train by which I myself had travelled. Perhaps I could get a lift by that . . .

Of course I could. I was welcomed. Straight away I was to find that splendid spirit of help and companionship which pervaded all the ten years I was to stay at the place. As it turned out I was to discover that my presence had meant a most uncomfortable journey for two other men, but I had to ascertain that fact for myself. They did not tell me ; I was a new-comer—the best that they could offer was mine by right.

What a glorious drive that was. Once through the gates which shut off the outside world, a most entrancing, intimate little valley opened out ; narrow, steep-sided, clothed in straggling woods of fir and pine, chestnut and sycamore, with here and there a blush of heather peeping over from the moors above ; meadows in the bottom, hedges, trees and flowers ; great limestone cliffs ; a tiny river dancing along not fifty yards away ; and that clean, white road, with the railway lines immediately alongside, winding away before me into the unknown.

Always we were climbing ; a steady, never varying gradient ; and always, it seemed, new and yet more exciting bits of country came into view. We rounded a corner, a narrow gorge between two towering rock faces where a tunnel had had to be blasted through to ease the bend for

railway traffic, and at once we seemed to be shut in by high, steep-sided hills. They reared up sharply from the narrow strip of pastureland and meadow which filled the valley bottom. The trees grew fewer, changing also in variety. Chestnuts and sycamores gave place to thorns and rowans; and soon even these became sparse and scattered. The hillsides were bare; just great, towering masses of limestone rock and scree rising above rough benty 'intakes,' with here and there a tongue of heather reaching down almost to the road. Ahead, blocking the top of the valley, lay the flanks of two tremendous hills, their crests among the clouds. The dalesmen had not been misinformed; it was 'wild country' all right.

Still climbing, up and up, level now with the heather line on the far side of the river still tumbling along, although now some two hundred feet or so below us. A great, mile-long gash on the opposite hillside loomed into view, a maze of naked cliffs and tumbled spoil-banks. My friend at the wheel somehow caught my eye. 'The quarry,' he explained.

I stared at the vast size of it, a dozen questions on my lips. I had not time to voice them. Another bend in the road took me into full view of the works themselves. Sheds, buildings, railway sidings (I found out later there were seventeen miles of broad-gauge track and another nine of narrow), great blue shale-tips, stacks of timber, puffs of steam rising from countless engines of one sort or another, locomotives and cranes—acres and acres of high-pressure industry. Knots of men worked busily here and there; navvies, platelayers—all sorts of men. We rattled along the rough and stony road, bouncing over crossings, dodging heaps of coal and sand and ballast. The hum of machinery filled the air. The gaunt frameworks of two aerial con-

veyors reared up towards the sky, their cables stretching thread-like three hundred feet above the river bed from one side of the valley to the other. Even as we approached a huge iron skip lifted swiftly up from one of the buildings by the roadside, came to rest a moment silhouetted high against the blue, and then, dipping and swooping like a swallow, swung dizzily away along its lofty journey to the other side. A train of concrete skips, twelve of them, came rocking and swaying at full speed along the railway at our side, towering over us as it passed. A crane jib suddenly swung round, a 40-foot baulk of timber in its grip. We paused a moment until it passed. Telephone wires and power cables ran everywhere. It was an amazing sight; a strange phenomenon to come across in the midst of those wild and desolate moorland fastnesses.

About a mile of this, and then our road came to an end. In front of us yawned a vast trench, fifty or sixty yards in width, eight hundred long and, at the point where we were, almost three hundred feet in depth. 'Foundations for the dam,' my friend explained. 'You'll be wanting the office? That's it.'

A long, one-storied wooden building was this office. I could see men working in its many rooms as I passed the uncurtained windows, men striving with heavy ledgers, others with blue prints—all seemingly pretty busy and intent upon their jobs.

I was shown in to the engineer, a Scotsman with whom I felt at ease at once. I was expected. All arrangements had been made; my bed and board, my work, my everything. In five minutes I was at home.

At home! It was to be my home for ten full years!

The job inflicted upon me, I found, brought me into more or less intimate contact with the thousand or so buck

navvies employed about the works. It took me quite a while to get to recognise even a few of them; for the names on the official rolls were, I found, very different from those by which the men were known to their work-mates and gangers. Nicknames were the rule, and any personal detail of whatever sort was excuse enough to tag on some descriptive adjective or other. A one-armed man was known as 'Wingy'—one with a wooden leg as 'Peg.' Anyone above 6 foot 2 or 3 was referred to as 'Slen', a diminutive of 'slender,' I suppose, although some 'Slens' were obviously far from being devotees of the modern fashionable cult for slimming. The names of towns, used by virtue of birth or long association, were possibly the most frequent; 'Bradford,' 'Brummy,' 'Dublin.' I would inquire for Jesse Burborough, the name on the books, but nobody in the gangs had ever heard of him. For forty years he had been known to his mates as 'Oxford Slen' and nothing else. 'Isle o' Wight,' 'Spanner Jack,' 'Mad Bristol,' 'Dancing Fanny'—a man actually named after a Clydesdale mare his father had once driven—'Mouching Taff,' 'Sailor'; there were scores of these pseudonyms. In some of them the aptness of the association was difficult to see. However, inside a month, I was using them myself.

In fact, inside a month I was doing many things. Life moved very swiftly up there, I found. There was always something 'on.' Money had been lavishly spent on the amenities of the place. There was a huge concert hall, a cinema (with a change of programme twice a week) a canteen, shops, school, church, gymnasium, tennis-court, billiards—everything. The whole place was self-contained, splendidly so. And everything going all out. They were enthusiastic livers; everybody always seemed to be on the very top of their form. I began to enjoy myself.

I think some of the smoking concerts—males only, of course—were the funniest. One night we took over the canteen, three hundred of us. We engaged a full professional orchestra—orchestras were easy to get; they liked coming—and we parked them on a beautiful, flower-decked platform we had rigged up in a corner. We elected a chairman—the resident doctor—and got to work.

Music alone filled the air at first, and then concerted song. Then solos. Some of those solos were a riot! The chairman, wise, understanding soul, soon retired from his eminent position and took up a more inconspicuous seat at the rear of the hall. As is always the way, at first nobody wanted to sing: after a couple of hours everybody did! The stewards had their work cut out. One ebullient songster—only a little chap, but he had once played scrum-half in the Rugby League and brought the knowledge gained on many a hard fought field into play—slipped through the cordon and scrambled up on to the stage under cover of the piano. I don't think the majority of us had noticed him at all until he suddenly burst forth into a joyous tenor aria. It was an action song—or 'Snowy' made it so—*con espressione*. His first notes hit the roof, and a magnificent Napoleonic gesture of his left hand nearly felled the chap with the bull-fiddle. It rather upset him—or our laughter did; it might have been either. But it was nothing to what was coming. 'Snowy' drew himself up with solemn dignity, I believe with the original intention of calling our behaviour into question, stepped back a pace, and the upper edge of the big drum caught him behind the knees.

The drummer evidently played many parts. He had a wonderful assortment of gadgets in front of him; two drums, cymbals, tapping-boards, a triangle—I don't know

what else. They all went over with 'Snowy.' I never heard such a row in my life. The songster sat up, surrounded by flowers and shining brass, smiled benignantly around and, from this safe position, promptly began the yodelling song from, I think, 'William Tell.' We cheered him to the echo.

Sometimes we had these 'smokers'—rather more exclusive ones—at one of the larger inns down the dale. A trip would be arranged, taxis or a bus got up, and then, immediately after the evening meal, the convoy would set off. 'Sunday' clothes, of course, for these 'dos'; white cords, moleskin waistcoats, black silk neckerchiefs, boots in which you could see yourself—full levee dress, in fact.

The biggest room in the place would be put at our disposal, the one used for the annual farmers' dinners and suchlike functions; a piano brought in, tables and chairs arranged, and all other movables surreptitiously taken away.

As is our way, we entered shyly; being ushered like so many sheep by the amicable but watchful publican into the fold arranged for us. Somebody would place a hat in the middle of the table, and into this everyone threw what loose money he thought fit. The resultant sum—the equivalent of perhaps an hour's supplies—would then be formally handed over, still in the hat, to the waiting landlord.

This sordid, but necessary detail disposed of—for the time being!—we would settle down. Pints—all pints—would be brought in and the proceedings were open. Someone would be called upon for a song, and after the usual bashful remonstrances he would mount the little dais fixed up at the end of the room. A muttered conversation, very serious, would ensue between him and the pianist and an arrangement come to. If the latter knew the song, well and good: if not, a few bars would be breathed into his

ear, and after a suitable vamping rhythm had been found and a trial chord or two approved of, the show was on. With a flamboyant double-forte run up the keys the pianist would arrest attention. Conversation died down. A few nervous pluckings at his neckerchief and the first notes of a sadly sentimental ditty would come floating down over the now half-empty pint pots.

I wonder why all the 'rough-necks' of the world prefer this 'sob-stuff.' Soldiers, sailors, miners, navvies—nine out of ten of their favourite songs are about somebody (male) dying, or (female) 'being wronged.' I've seen the sort of chap who in the ordinary way would have cheerfully kicked anybody's brains out on the slightest provocation, get up on to his hind legs and drool out the most sickening, slushy stuff imaginable. And feel it too; be obviously distressed about the sorrow he was ventilating—almost as distressed as I was!

Well, the night would hasten along its allotted way. Pints would be refilled by the watchful waiter; song would follow song. Someone might tell a story, and, encouraged, go on to tell a few more, each a little more colourful than the previous one. Half-way through what might, or might not, have actually been meant to be the last of them, the landlord would tiptoe in and, with whispered apologies for disturbing the artiste, would slide the hat on to the table—empty. There would come a vociferous yell from the nearest member of the party—we ourselves suffered from no puerile inhibitions about the reverence due to the Stage—and a second shower of coins would rattle down on to the table. Rather bigger coins this time: we were getting warmed up.

Chorus songs became popular. One especially I remember. There was a yodel in this one, too; and to hear the

variety of choking noises as the assembled company tried to join in was an education. One or two refrained ; the chap on my right, a huge, elderly Jock called 'Sandy,' among them.

'Why aren't *you* singing, Sandy?' I inquired lightly.

He half turned to look at me reprovingly. Grave, aloof, dignified, all his native Scots austerity in his eyes ; I thought I must have offended him.

'Gie's me hiccups,' he explained.

With ever-increasing frequency the hat appeared. No check whatever was taken on what amount it contained or whether or no we got full value. We were gentlemen, not tradesfolk.

Somebody produced a concertina, and for half an hour the discordant strains mingled with the noise of conversation and the ever more frequent bursts of jovial laughter from one group or another. A little Lancashire chap jumped on the dais and gave a clog-dance. He had pukka clogs on too ; beautifully fashioned little things with white eyelet-holes and ornamentation. And then, *mirabile dictu*, some joker produced a set of pipes. A full man's set. I expected a riot, but instead of that a heavy seriousness seemed to fall upon a majority of the revellers. Half a dozen of the biggest men in the room rose grandly to their feet and stalked majestically towards the platform. A dignified altercation ensued between them. Piping was no light matter apparently, and there appeared to be some ritual of precedence involved. However, at last it was settled and the pipes reverently handed over to—I noticed with some surprise—my erstwhile companion 'Sandy.'

I am no Scot, and I think bagpipes should be played outside. But the sight of that gigantic Jock, big and broad, rugged as his native granite, standing there with the pipes

under his arm and the brave tartan streamers fluttering around him . . . There was pride of race there all right.

The pipes took us on until closing time. 'Finals'—all 'short' ones—appeared by the trayful, and as promptly disappeared, one lot after another. It was terrific. Somehow I seemed to get a fleeting glimpse of what Macbeth's banquet hall might have looked like.

However, at last the convoy was whistled up and in we got ; with a wondering crowd of wide-eyed village yokels, standing well back out of harm's way, to see us off. Half an hour later we were at home.

'Jags,' they called these full-blooded outings. Sometimes we went farther afield, into one of the big cities, and generally when we wanted to see some special show—a tattoo, a super-film, something of that sort—any kind of a peg to hang the excuse upon. We would arrange to meet afterwards at the garage where the bus, or buses, had been parked ; but an hour before that time little coteries of our fellows could be found in all the near-by pubs, swapping the time of day with a crowd of pseudo-sophisticated townees. At that time of night some of the latter's outlooks and opinions were apt to prove a trifle supercilious. They didn't meet a mob of innocents like us every day. It was a rare opportunity for them to show their paces ; hoping, no doubt, to be rewarded by a free drink from some of us supposedly awestruck yokels. They got free drinks a-plenty, but it was not due to any admiration on our part, as I dare say they put it down to ; it was merely the navvy's innate generosity and utter inability to hang on to his money.

But occasionally *we* scored. I remember once standing up at the bar with one of our gangers, one of the 'Slens,' a long, gaunt, gipsy-looking fellow, with a grisly trickle

of tobacco juice perpetually lurking in the corner of his mouth. We had just dropped in for a last one before getting the bus. A big, beery, bookmaker sort of chap, his hat pushed back at a wonderful angle and a cigar cocked between his teeth, was leaning on the counter ogling the ornately caparisoned blonde behind the bar. As he talked he continually spanned thumb and forefinger across the top one of a pile of coarse dinner-plates stacked on the mahogany in front of him : I suppose they were used for sandwiches. He could just manage to lift it and put it down again.

Apparently he was very proud of this trick, for, as the barmaid grasped the pump handle to draw our pints, he turned with a self-satisfied, smug sort of grin round towards us. 'Biggest span in Bradford,' he bragged. 'Biggest span in Bradford. I bet you've never seen a span like that, eh?' He did it again to show us.

Well, my own hand is comparatively small, but 'Slen's' extremities were a joke all over the works. They were almost a deformity. In the ordinary balance of nature they would have had to be long to fit that lanky body ; but as they were . . . My companion merely reached across the two of us, crooked his long, emaciated-looking thumb and fingers down the edges of the plates and lifted half a dozen. The bookie fellow goggled, while his inamorata behind the bar let out a startled little shriek. Well she might ! The sight of those gaunt, curving talons, each finger looking as long as a foot-rule, coiling slowly round the edges of those plates was enough to give anybody the horrors. They looked like a vulture's. And with that dark, saturnine face behind them, unsmiling, uninterested almost . . .

Our bookie friend was quiet. He hadn't recovered by the time we left.

Of course the trick was old stuff to men like 'Slen.'

There were many like him who had some little physical peculiarity or other and would trot it out at times for the amusement of the crowd in the canteen or reading-room at home. Tricks of strength, as was perhaps natural, were commonest. One chap had got off the knack of lifting a heavy chair by the bottom of one of the front legs. The leverage was, of course, enormous ; how he did it I don't know—I couldn't move the thing. Then every now and then, during the midday lunch-hour, there would be impromptu weight-lifting contests ; all sorts of lifts, in all sorts of ways, from two hundredweight cement bags to bits of railway.

They were strong fellows. I never saw such chaps. Some of the things they did were simply ridiculous, unbelievable. But of course, after all, that was their job.

We had a ju-jutsu enthusiast came to us once ; a light, sandy-haired fellow, name of 'George.' I imagine that actually he was rather good at the game, too. However, after a couple of trial bouts he chucked it just to save his own life.

Boxers, as might be expected, were common. We had many ex-naval men and many more brought up in a tougher school still—broken-down old 'pugs' and sparring partners ; quiet, unassuming, patient fellows, all of them, invariably using their influence on the side of decorum and order.

But decorum and order were the rule, really. At no time was there any of the roaring, he-man stuff one sees, or saw, so often in the films of mining and other life. If two men got across, say in the canteen, there was no shouting or scrapping there. The two would quietly rise, maybe with a couple of their friends, and just sidle inconspicuously out of the door and make their way down to the timber-yard—'where the bulls feed,' as it was facetiously known.

There the matter would be settled and the general company would not have been disturbed in the slightest ; not known anything about it, in fact.

But the next day would be a *dies non* all right for both of them.

I loved some of those nights in the canteen. Heavy tile-topped tables, seating maybe half a dozen, were scattered over the room, and round these would gather individual little coteries of kindred spirits ; some tables noisy and hard-drinking, others comparatively quiet and reserved. Often, I think, the choice made by some of the habitués was a matter of finance. I liked it best, though, when not very many would be in, one of the 'off nights,' when, instead of our sitting round the tables, chairs and stools would be drawn up round one or other of the great roaring fires at either end of the room. Then, under the mellowing influence of firelight and ale, with maybe a background of suitable 'noises off' created by a raging blizzard outside, some of the older hands (we had several over seventy) might be prevailed upon to tell us something of their careers up and down the world.

They had remarkable stories to tell, some of these old fellows ; tales of every country under the sun, from the Klondyke of '98 to the Kimberley diamond mines, Buenos Ayres to Ballarat, Simonstown, Nova Scotia, Singapore ; stories told in a casual, unpretentious way whose very simplicity gave wings to the imagination. 'I used to play the concertina every night in a pub at Ferrol . . .—'I went "on tramp" from Detroit . . .—'Once in a dope and dolly shop in Shanghai . . .'

Well-read fellows, too, many of them. One I remember especially ; an old time-serving soldier who knew all Burns—all Burns—by heart and could quote glibly from half a

dozen other poets. 'Fill me with the old familiar juice' might raise no more than a smile when given as a reply to the usual question; but it was a little startling—until one knew him—to be gently ushered out of harm's way down on the works, an explanatory finger pointing at the same time to a swinging crane-jib, by the quotation—

*'Look with what courteous action
It waves you to a more removed ground.'*

He took the sting out of a trapped hand for me, too, when he consolingly murmured in my ear—

*'Ay me, what perils do environ
The man who meddles with cold iron.'*

I thought, at first, Charlie must be an exception; and in a way, of course, he was. But there were plenty of others.

There was old—— Well, I won't give his name, save to say that he is known by that of one of the most ancient and famous of Irish cities. He was far and away the best looking man I ever saw, white hair, clear skin, of magnificent physique and straight as a ramrod in spite of his sixty odd years, with a disposition as gentle and kindly as his own west-country breezes. He took Father Christmas at all the children's parties, and at any of our British Legion or other festivities it was always he who, surreptitiously, took on the washing-up and dirty work. Half a dozen of us would go through to do the job, only to find Pat in his shirt-sleeves already there and the clean, dried plates all stacked away. We called a committee meeting to move a resolution giving him some token of our appreciation, and I myself was deputed to approach him as to what he would like. We had thought of a case of pipes, something of that sort.

But when I tackled him, and at last had overcome his protestations, he shyly asked me, in his delicately flavoured brogue: 'Well, sorr, there's one thing I *would* like to have of my own. D'you think a copy of Yeats's poems would be after costing too much?' Six feet two, fifteen stone—poems!

We had a great many Irishmen, of course; eight or nine hundred of them. They weren't *all* poets!

All the same, most of them had some story to tell, grave or gay, about the 'ould counthry.' They had the legends and the folk-lore of their particular district at their fingertips—leprechauns, ghostly salmon, 'little people'—I never knew such chaps for the supernatural. Weather lore, too, they professed to be versed in, and when proved wrong, always had some totally irrelevant excuse or other; maybe they'd met a cross-eyed cat on the road, and that had, of course, altered everything.

One of the best schemes in this line was that employed by 'Oxford.' His bed was alongside the window of the cubicle he occupied, and on retiring at night he hung his stocking over the sill. The following morning he would just reach out sleepily and draw it in. If it felt freshly wet he knew it was raining and stayed where he was. Like Issachar, he knew that rest was good.

Superstition was rife as to the treatment of cuts and other wounds. One old fellow, for instance, when he jabbed himself badly with a rusty nail, took pains to remove the offending cause from its piece of timber and ceremoniously burnt it, no doubt with the correct words of incantation. Very definitely he attributed his long immunity from blood poisoning to this peculiar form of homeopathy.

And dreams—dreams were sent for a purpose; especially those to do with horseflesh. If anyone dreamt of a winner

the whole place backed it. Whether or no it came up made no difference. It could not possibly be the dream which was wrong; it was our interpretation of it, and of course with an Irishman's ingenuity in that line, there was generally little difficulty in finding some more or less remote 'pointer' that had been missed.

All the same, they were wonderful chaps at finding winners. I recall, very vividly, talking one night, a few years ago now, in one of the inn taprooms a few miles down the dale. Somehow one of our navvies had wandered in and was just sitting there quietly in a corner, puffing stolidly at his pipe and with a pint of ale in front of him. My friend and I were chatting with the landlord about the following day's—'Cambridgeshire' I think it was. The old chap in the corner, so far as we saw, was not paying the slightest attention to anything except his own thoughts; but as he finished his drink and rose to go he just remarked: 'Pullover'll win!'

'Pullover' was at the bottom of the betting list at 150-1. But it won all right.

Wherever do they get these tips?

Cards, too—most of them were pretty hot at cards. One time I was watching a school playing some rather outlandish form of poker and, as invariably, they were playing for pretty high stakes. The game drew to a close and, having one pet card trick of my own which I am rather proud about, I just picked up the pack and said jocularly, 'See, I'll show you how to deal.' And, after a bit of what I thought quite good manipulation, I dealt myself four aces and another card. They smiled politely, and then, with a wink at his companions, one of them took the pack from me.

I never saw anything like it, on the stage or off. He dazzled me. I never felt such a damned fool in my life.

The pack was passed round. They were *all* expert, all of them ; one was as good as another ; they could do what they liked with a pack. *I show them how to deal, forsooth !*

Race meetings, anywhere within fifty or sixty miles, were naturally highly popular venues. Men would save up for them ; going strictly T.T. for weeks before. Then a party of them would have a real go. Sometimes I have seen them come back in style, always a day or two late, and even then possessed of a wad of notes as thick as a man's thumb. At other times they would cheerfully admit with a Rabelaisian luxury of unprintable metaphor, that they had been 'on tramp.' They stuck together ; no one walked back or lost any bit of the enjoyment if there was a winner among them.

Loyalty, I think, was their most well-developed trait. They might cheerfully put their foot through each of the ten commandments one after the other, but they wouldn't let a pal down. Never would we come away before the whole party was assembled or we definitely knew that the missing one intended to stay over, and of his own accord. Specially typical was this of—I might almost call them the 'Three Musketeers.' A grim trio, those three. One of them might roll up at the rendezvous alone, having missed his two friends somewhere or other. He would inquire if they had turned up yet. If not, he went to find them, and sensibly enough, the first places he called upon were the various police-stations, asking plaintively at each one in turn, 'Have you two chaps called—and—locked up ?'

If he found them there he would demand to be locked up with them, having first arranged for a message to be sent back to us that all three were 'all right.'

But one dear little chap, a painter—he had actually been a male nurse at one time—very frequently did get lost. He

would make excursions on his own to the most unlikely places, and, respectable little soul as he was, Charlie always dressed up as a civilian for his solitary gallivants. Quite a few of the younger 'black-gang' fellows—engineers and mechanics—mounted a collar on Sundays, but Charlie went the whole hog. Billycock hat, black coat, striped trousers, stiff linen collar and 'dickey,' four-in-hand tie, light townee boots—he looked what he was, one of the shining lights of our little church.

But every now and then he trod the slippery places and backslid rather badly. Once he got locked up; but instead of taking things philosophically and dropping off into a deep and healing sleep, as did the others—who had, no doubt, acquired wisdom at its usual price—Charlie, in a considerable state of flux, loftily demanded that his captors should at once ring up the resident engineer—no less—at the works and get him bailed out.

But it was seed sown upon stony ground. Charlie slept with the others.

Those others! One of them told me once that it was always a relief to him every morning when he woke up not to find himself in gaol.

Strangely enough, as I believe I have mentioned before, we never had trouble of any sort actually on the works. We had a resident policeman, a huge chap weighing seventeen or eighteen stone (not that that had any influence), but really he had nothing to do. The only times he was noticeably in evidence was when the County Constabulary came up in full pomp looking for 'wanteds' for murder. Public Works, with their floating populations, are favourite hiding-places. The gangers themselves start what labourers they require, choosing them without formality or inquiry of any sort from the many who roll up every morning in

search of work. How did we know who they were? And so long as they did their navvying satisfactorily, we didn't care. Their past did not concern us, nor their future either. As for to-day, we could look after that all right. Even a murderer would feel subdued with fourteen or fifteen thousand stones' weight of muscular humanity, obviously as free from convention as himself, surrounding him. We had our own code of justice—and the means to execute it. A bully or other undesirable didn't last long. He was soon off 'down the road.'

'Down the road' was a phrase we had. The works were on the top of a hill and the only means of access or egress was by the long, winding private road I have referred to before. If anyone left the village, he had 'gone down the road.'

The hostel landladies made use of the phrase most frequently, I believe. Whenever any of their ebullient charges had proved unduly annoying—fallen over the parrot's cage, for instance—the angry virago would rise up like an angel of wrath, splendid and terrible, and go for the cowering culprit tooth and nail, describing, in a voice like a tin plate, the flaws in his ancestry with a wealth of picturesque detail which left little to the imagination. Invariably she finished up with the threat, 'I'll have ye sent down the road, you——!'

There was truth in what one of the victims wryly remarked to me as he crept away. 'Faith,' said he; 'the curse never fell on old Ireland till now.'

And as for a possible 'bilker'—some casual labourer who had, by some means, got started and, not liking work, was trying to sneak away without paying his score . . .

We used to pay men off at the timekeepers' office. All a labourer had to do was to ask his ganger for his 'time'

—a little signed chit showing what time he had knocked off work—and bring it to his 'timey.' The latter would reckon up what money was due, often only a few shillings, and pay the sum over, handing the man his health and unemployment insurance cards at the same time. Then, without more ado, the man would set off 'down the road.'

If his bill were not already paid he kept a wary eye open for trouble. Sure enough his landlady would be waiting round the first corner, and if the money was not immediately forthcoming—no argument!—she would let fly a scientific clip to the jaw which spun him round as if he had been struck by lightning. The one smack was generally enough. 'Meladdo' shelled out.

Tough, these females? My oath!

All the same, kinder hearted, more genuine women, it has never been my lot to meet. We had ten of them, and not one would ever see a man go hungry. However down and out he appeared to be he could have his meal and bed before trying the following morning for a start on the works. If he got one, well and good, he went back to that particular hostel and stayed there; if he didn't, well, all he had to do was to say so and he went off 'on tramp' again with a full meal inside him and another wrapped up for the road.

This splendid cameraderie permeated everybody on the job. From the humblest 'nipper' looking after a set of railway points to the engineer at the head of the whole huge undertaking, everybody went out of their way to help the 'under dog.' And help generously and practically, too. A hungry man wants food, not words of advice. At times, of course, really good men, men known as such to all the gangers on the job, rolled up in search of a start. Perhaps, owing to weather or other contingencies, he could

not be given one. He might have tramped all the way from Newcastle, or Hull, or any other place for that matter, and would now have to tramp back. A quick whip-round would be organised at once, and the coins given would not be coppers or threepenny-bits: everyone gave royally—'it might be my turn next'—and the old fellow, the mud of his last wayfaring not yet dry upon his boots, would set off on the weary search once more, but with ten or twelve pounds, perhaps more, in his purse to help him on his way.

It was really splendid, this generous, unquestioning comradeship. I never came across it elsewhere, save in the war. There were no unctuous, hypocritical restrictions or words of advice as to how he should spend the money. What matter if the whole lot *was* blued-in at the next pub? 'The poor devil will have had a good drink, anyway.'

Any man off work six weeks got a collection. It made up what he had lost in wages. We weren't quite masters of our fate but, collectively, we came very near to it. Nobody was going to lose by bad luck if we could help it.

Sentimentalists? Perhaps. But do not forget that these were men with a contemptuous familiarity with the world, the flesh and the devil; men who knew toil as few men know it, privation, violence and debauchery, famine and thirst and all the rest of the miseries; hard-bitten toughs who had no fear of anything or anyone on earth, and who would have smashed the tablets of the law into smithereens with one deft crack of their twenty-eight-pound hammers. Sentimentalists they might be; cynicism and meanness were the things they most despised.

What are we to say of the canteen manager, extending a welcome to half a dozen rain-soaked, hungry immigrants who, arriving late one night, asked for a crust of bread at

the only place in the village where there happened to be a light, and who met them with the words, 'Come away in, bhoys, I've the side of a pig in there'?

The 'side of a pig.' Maybe it wouldn't be too much after all. They had appetites commensurate with their size, most of these navvies. Nine hours' work in the keen mountain air, hard muscular work, stirred up the digestive organs better than any *apéritifs*. The food in the hostels was good, but of necessity all men had to have the same. It fell rather hard on a few of the older men whose teeth perhaps were not quite what they were. One old fellow, I'll call him 'Warwick,' ate what he could of the softer foods put down before him, but for meat he relied upon his own private purchase. He had half a dozen very luscious chops brought up every morning, and these he used to fry himself during the half-hour allowed for the midday break. For a frying-pan he used a specially-kept navvy's shovel, burnished like silver and always spotlessly clean. The half-dozen chops would be placed on this and then cooked over one of the braziers. It made a first-class utensil, for all the gravy ran down into the two hollows each side of the blade, where the end of the shaft went in, a very handy position for basting, and of course the long, balanced handle gave him absolute control of heat adjustment. The odour of chops filled all the shed. I tell you, old 'Warwick' made our mouths water.

Actually most of the men were pretty good cooks, and what surprised me at first, considering their general 'rough-neck' character, was the fastidiousness displayed by all but a very few. While 'on tramp' they might 'drum up'—make tea—in any old tin can, but before use that tin would be scoured and scoured and scoured until the inside of it shone like a mirror. They might be frying a snared bunny

or a few eggs pilfered from some unlucky hen-roost ; on occasion perhaps something more succulent still (for a navvy can appreciate a grouse or pheasant as well as anybody), but invariably, I found, the box lid which might be serving as a cooking tin was scrupulously clean, as was also the blade of the jack-knife with which the carcase was dissected.

I used to envy some of these old stagers. Frequently a dozen or more would purposely roll up, one by one or by twos and threes, on the Saturday ; so that they could have a week-end's rest before applying for, and probably obtaining, work on the Monday. If it were summer weather they wouldn't bother about hostel accommodation—with its charges and restrictions—but would all gather in the purlieu of an isolated and deserted old farmhouse, partly demolished preparatory to its future flooding over by the waters of the reservoir. There they would encamp, two or three attending to the domestic arrangements while the others wandered off into the village and cajoled what food they required out of the inhabitants, together with a few odd bottles of beer from the sympathetic souls in the Canteen.

A very fair haul they made, too.

Sometimes I used to come past this farmhouse on my way home after an evening's fishing, and the sight of those contented old rascals, sitting quietly over their wood fire, with the soft night air all about them, trees, and birds twittering sleepily, and a clear, soft sky overhead, with probably not a coin of the realm—or a care in the world—between them. . . . Oh, well ; the tang of wood-smoke always gets me like that !

As a matter of fact, I think they felt these things, too. They must have. Scores and scores of times, on some bright sunny morning when the whole outside world has

seemed richly alive and every wild thing as light-hearted and irresponsible as it possibly could be, I have known one after the other of these restless old fellows call at the pay-window for his 'time.'

'What's wrong, "Snowy"? Got across with the ganger?'

'Snowy' would smile. Then, with an expressive sweep of his arm towards the sun-bathed world around him, 'My feet itch,' he would explain simply. 'I'm going for a walk.'

He might have half a crown to draw. Half a crown with which to face the world again! With no definite idea, even, where he intended making for. Yes, I think they felt the call all right.

I wonder where it took them. I have often wondered. Perhaps, in the end, to the other side of the world, to some contract for a naval base, or a railway, perhaps a dam like this one. Maybe only as far as the next 'spike' or work-house. But wherever it may be, from my experience one thing is pretty certain. That place will be all the richer for their presence.

STREET SCENE.

BY JAMES FERGUSSON.

I CANNOT now remember what had kept me so late abroad that night. It is more than fifty years ago : I was a small boy, scarcely ten years old. I was probably down at the harbour, where I used to spend so much of my time. The sights and the colours of the quays fascinated me almost more by night than in the broad day. There would be the ships moored along the sides of the basin, their great square-topped prows heaving up and down against the stars ; the grimy lanterns hung at each vessel's poop, that threw long shadows swinging to and fro across the cobbles ; the inky waves swelling and splashing along the ships' sides and the stone wall of the quay ; and the smell of tarry ropes and old sacks flavouring the wind off the sea. Moreover, I never tired of peeping into the little wooden taverns along the water-front, where one could see the sailors drinking—Venetians, Spaniards, Greeks, Genoese, Portuguese, Moors, negroes, and many others whose race I could only guess at. I can remember those evenings at the harbour better than much I have seen since.

Well, be the cause what it may, I had stayed out for a long time that evening, and I was hurrying home, wondering what my mother would say when I reached it, and whether I should get any supper, or only a beating. I told myself that my mother should be more reasonable now, since there was nothing that could harm me in the city, and we no longer lived in fear of a sudden descent of the Ottoman's ships. Was it not only a few days since the Governor's

proclamation had set us all dancing in the very streets for joy at our deliverance from that ancient peril? I remembered the clamorous triumph of the bells, and the bonfires that had blazed in the market-place. Only two galleys rode at anchor fully manned by the harbour-mouth now, instead of the former ten; and it was said that the very beacon-guard was set no longer in the citadel, such was our present security. Nevertheless my mother did not like me to be roaming the streets after dark, and this evening I had certainly disobeyed her in staying out so late. So, although the night was moonless, I ran along through the silent streets, which I knew as well as a rabbit knows his own patch of wood, leaping steps and kennels, slipping nimbly from arch to arch, and already thinking what face I should put on and what words I should have on my lips when I knocked at my mother's door.

I was in the same street, I remember, where I had watched the Venetian envoy pass a few hours earlier, going up with torches before him to sup with the general and his captains at the citadel. As I hurried up it I heard a confused noise beyond a narrow alley which opened into it from the left. The regular beating of a man's footsteps had stopped suddenly, a voice cried some words I could not distinguish, there was a clash of swords.

Brawls were not uncommon in the town at night; but with a boy's curiosity I halted, wondering if it would be safe to creep up the alley and see what was happening. After listening for a moment, however, I thought it better to go on. There was the sound of a heavy fall, a sword rang upon the stones, and a second, deeper voice called: *'Help, ho! Murder! Murder!'*

If murder was the case, I thought, the sooner I reached home the better. The officers would be out before long, for

the wounded man had a lusty voice and continued to cry for help. I hurried up the street with my heart pounding at my ribs, doubled to the left, crossed another street, ducked under a low archway—and found suddenly that I had taken a wrong turning. I was in a narrow passage with but one entrance, where a single lantern with a guttering wick hung above a doorway. I realized that I should have kept on for another twenty yards and turned through the next archway. Hastily I darted back towards the corner.

But I stopped short as I reached it. A man was coming up the street, going towards the citadel with steady silent steps. I feared lest he might be one of the men whose quarrel I had heard; and as he approached I remained upright and motionless, pressing my body against the wall of the passage and trying with all my might to hold my panting breath.

The night was troubled with a gusty wind. It blew up the street from the direction of the harbour, bringing with it the sound of groans and shuffling footsteps from the corner where I had heard the fighting. Someone cried, '*Who's there?*' The wounded man still shouted for help, and the new voice answered him. But the man who was coming towards me neither turned his head nor quickened his pace. He strode on his way, erect and solemn, moving as though some great purpose lay before him from which he would not turn aside.

As he crossed the mouth of the passage the lanterns flickering light fell for a second full upon his face. I shivered as I looked, although I was sure he could not see me. The face was very dark, with a short curled black beard and a crisp moustache. The nose was curved, the cheek hollow yet firm, and the full lips set like rock. One would have called it a noble face, but for the eyes, which were fixed,

wide open, and glaring, like those of a man upon the rack. It was the sight of those eyes that appalled me ; and my fear was deepened as I realized that I knew the man. It was the foreign general whose ships had entered the harbour a fortnight before, with all the guns of the citadel thundering louder than the storm to welcome him.

He passed on. I had no power to move, but stayed there, clinging to the wall, with my heart cold within me. Down the street there was a fierce shout and an answering curse, as though the fight were being renewed. More voices joined in, doors were unbarred, and footsteps hurried across the cobbles. But I heeded them not : my curiosity was dead. I gathered all my courage, and was about to leave my refuge when other steps were suddenly audible in the street beside me.

This time it was a woman, coming the other way. She was walking with quick, anxious steps, her hand to her forehead, gazing into the darkness with puckered brows. I could see as she passed through the patch of lantern-light that her clothes were gay and brightly coloured, and that both the hand that was raised and that which held up her dress from the mud of the street were sparkling with rings. Her pretty face was very pale beneath the fair clustered ringlets of her hair, though the half-opened lips were unnaturally red. There was fear and apprehension in her expression, and it flashed across my mind that perhaps she had caught a glimpse of that same grim face that had so frightened me a few moments before.

She too went by, and I slipped out of the passage and ran. As I turned the corner I should first have chosen I heard behind me a shrill scream from the woman. She called a man's name, over and over again. Her voice faded behind me as I rushed on, gasping with thankfulness that I had not

to follow that black-bearded man with the tormented eyes, and a few minutes later I was at my mother's door and battering at it to be let in, out of the mysterious terrors of the street.

Next morning the news was running through the town that a young gentleman of Venice had been killed in the street during the night in some quarrel with an officer from the castle. People thought they had quarrelled over a woman of the town, and though I said nothing I thought of the woman I had seen. But long before noon this rumour was outrun all over Cyprus by another tale, how the Moorish general had strangled his wife in her bed that same night, and afterwards slain himself.

THE SEA AND MAN.

*Who, in this mountainous water's heaving power
That shakes the shore with every thunderous wave,
Would guess at the emerald calms that gently lave
These same cliff bases in a summer hour?
And who, when all this sea is like a bower
Of magic peace from tide-lace to the cave
Recessed, could know how it can rise and rave,
Changing to hell-spume from the perfect flower?*

*Even so is Man. Who, seeing his dragonish rage
Lash the whole Earth with wars and tyrannies,
Could think that Christ, Gautama, Socrates
Also were men? Or who, fed from the page
Of poetry's truth, would dream how Hell's vile seas
Could crash upon the world from age to age?*

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS—POET AND PRIEST.

BY IDA FINLAY.

SEVERAL photographs illustrate the three volumes of Gerard Hopkins's correspondence.¹ They show a fine, intellectual head, the eyes and brow serenely sad, and the face stamped with an expression of vulnerable candour. The camera does not contradict a contemporary pen portrait: 'What high serenity, what chastened intellectual power, what firm and resigned purpose, and withal what tranquil sadness or perhaps seriousness, suffusing the features rather than casting a shadow upon them!' To Hopkins the criterion of good literature was being not earnest, but in earnest, and he wears in his face the look of true sincerity, of being in earnest without affectation. What is the truth about this personality concerning whom such contrary things have been said and written?

His legacy to English literature is the slender volume of poems² which Bridges collected in manuscript and published many years after his friend's death. In his lifetime his prosody baffled the few readers of his poems; at times it even puzzled his two admirers, Robert Bridges and Canon R. W. Dixon, and Hopkins laughed outright, but 'very sardonically,' to think of them putting their heads together

¹ Vol. 1. *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, ed. Claud Collier Abbott. Vol. 2. *The Correspondence of G. M. H. and R. W. Dixon*, ed. Claud Collier Abbott. Vol. 3. *Further Letters of G. M. H., including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore*, ed. Claud Collier Abbott. Oxford Univ. Press.

² *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. with notes by Robt. Bridges; second edition by Charles Williams. Oxford Univ. Press.

and finally being obliged to ask him for a 'crib.' In our day his prosody is admired and imitated, but can a faithless age always reach his thought?

The poems have been supplemented by the letters, now completed with the publication of Professor Abbott's third volume, and a collection from notebooks of sermons and other papers, edited by Humphry House.¹ His life has been briefly outlined by Fr. Lahey, S.J.,² and filled in with extracts from the poems and letters since published. It is the letters which tell us most about the man and form the best background to his Poems. The friendship with Robert Bridges, begun at Oxford, was resumed by correspondence and kept up till the end of his life. The correspondence with Canon Dixon owes its origin to Hopkins's appreciation of the Canon's almost unknown poetry.

We see Gerard Hopkins first as an eager, clever school-boy with a passionate sense of justice. Far from being an aloof day-dreamer he seems to have entered with gusto into the momentous storms-in-a-teacup of the miniature world of school. At times he came into conflict with authority as on the occasion when, in order to prove his theory that people drank more liquid than was good for them, he abstained from all drink until his tongue went black. Among schoolboys, however, it required greater moral courage to brave ridicule and finally to win respect by keeping up his habit of reading a daily passage from the New Testament.

At Balliol he grew up, blossomed and burgeoned, and during the vacation fell so homesick for Oxford that he wrote from his home at Hampstead: 'I always find home so uncivilised . . . and you can only see *The Times* and *Saturday*

¹ *The Notebooks and Papers of G. M. H.*, ed. Humphry House, Oxford Univ. Press.

² *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, by G. F. Lahey, S.J. Oxford Univ. Press.

and nothing else, and the Church is dreary and friends talk of Oxford as if it were Samarkand or Bothnia Felix . . . ' He was caught up in the Oxford Movement and, while still at Balliol, converted to the Roman Catholic Church. Two years later he entered the Jesuit novitiate and so turned his back on the prizes of the world which seemed to be his for the asking.

The *Letters* are reticent about his life in the Society, but we have glimpses of him here and there : working in the slums of Liverpool, oppressed by the vice and filth ; happy at St. Beuno's College in Wales where the landscape had a peculiar charm for him—

*Lovely the woods, waters, meadows, combes, vales,
All the air things wear that build this world of Wales . . .*

failing in health and conscientiously struggling with the drudgery of examination work at University College, Dublin, weighing half-marks in the balance with a wet towel round his head at 3 a.m. He died at Dublin, of typhoid fever, in his forty-fifth year.

The first thing which strikes the reader of the letters is the single-hearted purposefulness of the man who wrote them. Whatever he does he does with all his might : all the powers of his intellect are concentrated on the matter which engages his attention for the time being whether it is poetry or music, criticism of his friends' poetry, correcting exam. papers or observing clouds in the sky or waves of the sea. Like a good workman, he does his work in its hour. This quality, the outcome of his natural character combined with his priestly training, made him an excellent critic. 'Patience, hard thing,' lies behind his study of prosody no less than his minute criticism of the poems of Bridges, Dixon and Patmore. No detail is too small for his notice yet he

never loses sight of the perspective of the whole. And poetry, music, the study of nature and the laborious occupations of his calling are all gathered up and subordinated to one single purpose. Behind them the reader is aware of the Ignatian definition of the last end of man: 'Man was created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.'

Next to this high aim and the patient care with which it was followed up in detail, the poet's correspondence reveals a profound loneliness. His circumstances cut him off from a writer's normal outlet and the letters addressed to the two poets who formed his audience disclose the fact that he was not insensitive to the deprivation.

When Hopkins entered the Jesuit novitiate he burnt all that he had written and for seven years wrote no more. Even then, though at a word from his superior he broke this silence, he wrote to Bridges:

'I cannot in conscience spend time on poetry, neither have I the inducements and inspirations that make others compose. Feeling, love in particular, is the great moving power and spring of verse, and the only person that I am in love with seldom, especially now, stirs my heart sensibly, and when he does I cannot always "make capital of it," it would be sacrilege to do so.'

Years afterwards, when he came to write *The Testament of Beauty*, Bridges remembered an incident—

'when the young poet my companion in study and friend of my heart refused a peach at my hands, he being then a housecarle in Loyola's menie . . .'

There were other peaches besides those growing in the garden which Hopkins refused.

By declining to write for publication he refused to snatch at the hope of fame which was his due, and this in spite of

the fact that he urged Bridges and Dixon and all true poets to remember that 'fame, the being known, though in itself one of the most dangerous things to man, is nevertheless the true and appointed air, element and setting of genius and its works . . .' He admitted that what was wanted to make his poetry more intelligible, smoother, and less singular, was an audience, and he allowed that he wished his poems could at some time become known, but in some spontaneous way and without his forcing it himself. The wish was not to be fulfilled in his lifetime.

'Life is a short blanket—profoundest of homely sayings,' he wrote, 'great gifts and great opportunities are more than life spares to one man. It is much if we get something, a spell, an innings at all. See how the great conquerors were cut short, Alexander, Cæsar. Above all Christ our Lord: his career was cut short and, whereas he would have wished to succeed by success—for it is insane to lay yourself out for failure, prudence is the first of the cardinal virtues, and he was the most prudent of men—nevertheless he was doomed to succeed by failure; his plans were baffled, his hopes dashed, and his work was done by being broken off undone. However much he understood all this he found it an intolerable grief to submit to it. He left the example: it is very strengthening, but except in that sense it is not consoling.'

He speaks also of the want of intellectual stimulus in his life. 'I sadly need that, and a general stimulus to being, so dull and yet harassed is my life.'

Fame then, and intellectual stimulus, were sacrificed to his religious vocation, but though his sensitive nature suffered from this there was never any doubt in his mind as to the relative importance of the religious and poetic demands. He puts the matter plainly and with humility in a letter to Dixon:

'My vocation puts before me a standard so high that a higher can be found nowhere else. The question then for me is not whether I am willing (if I may guess what is in your mind) to make a sacrifice of hopes of fame (let us suppose) but whether I am not to undergo a severe judgment from God for the lothness I have shown in making it, for the reserves I may have in my heart made, for the backward glances I have given with my hand on the plough, for the waste of time the very compositions you admire may have caused and their preoccupation of the mind which belonged to more sacred or more binding duties, for the disquiet and the thoughts of vainglory they have given rise to. A purpose may look smooth and perfect from without but be frayed and faltering from within. I have never wavered in my vocation, but I have not lived up to it.'

Having denied himself and followed Christ—'the only just judge, the only just literary critic . . . who prizes, is proud of, and admires, more than any man, more than the receiver himself can, the gifts of his own making'—he was content to leave what he had written to God's providence.

On one hand cut off from the congenial surroundings he had known at Oxford, on the other he had to bear the sorrow of his friends' lack of sympathy with his religion. With the exception of Patmore (with whom he became acquainted only towards the end of his life) those who shared his perceptions did not share his belief.

'You say you do not like Jesuits,' he wrote to Bridges, 'Did you ever see one?' He knew the letters S.J. acted as rubric and his dearest friend was not immune from the spell.

We can guess from the one-sided correspondence (Bridges' letters ^{were returned by Patmore} have not been kept) that Hopkins made tentative efforts to convert his friend. When Bridges went to hear

him preach, Hopkins regretted (on a post card) that he had not learnt his sermon better, was glad that Bridges did not like the music and sorry that he did not like the Mass. On another occasion we see the young priest with an anxious eye on his friend during a Corpus Christi procession, grieving that he had not been given a book to follow the words sung so that the beautiful hymns of St. Thomas might give meaning to the music and the rite. In vain, it seems, he wrote to him afterwards to explain the significance of the most purely joyous of solemnities. He desired to see his friend 'a Catholic or, if not that, a Christian or, if not that, at least a believer in the true God.' Being doubtful of his views on the deity, he urged him to give alms for charity's sake on the principle that alms redeem sins and will not let the soul go out into darkness, but Bridges misunderstood and was vexed, and called forth a second letter on the subject in which Hopkins begged him not to confuse the practice of almsgiving with the wearing of hairshirts.

Bridges could not resist an expression of approval when Addis, a mutual friend, left the Roman Catholic Church. 'But why should you be glad?' cried Gerard. 'Why at any rate should you burst upon me that you are glad, when you know that I cannot be glad? It seems there is something in you interposed between, what shall we say, the Christian and the man of the world, which hurts, which is to me like biting on a cinder in bread.'

The cinders cropped up fairly often. Bridges would not accept Hopkins's 'Prayer for Protestants,' written by request for an anthology, because it was too dogmatic. The letter which follows stresses certain fundamental differences between them. To Bridges a religious mystery meant an interesting uncertainty, and the interest lay in the uncertainty; to Hopkins it meant an incomprehensible certainty,

and this was the very ecstasy of interest. To Bridges dogma was, as to many, 'the dull algebra of the schoolmen'; to Hopkins it was news of all he held most intimate and dear.

To the last, when he came to edit the *Poems*, Bridges maintained that his friend sometimes forced emotion into theological channels, as if he could not believe that this was spontaneous and sincere. Nevertheless no handsomer tribute has been paid than the poem written in dedication of the First Edition to the fact that Hopkins's religion was not a hypothesis but a life.

The same orthodox spirit rendered Greek mythology a frigid and unworkable material for Hopkins and made him grieve that even the good Canon Dixon was capable of writing a 'heathenish' poem. He had, however, nothing of the narrow sectarian about him. Patmore wrote of him :

'Gerard Hopkins was the only orthodox, and as far as I could see, saintly man in whom religion had absolutely no narrowing effect upon his general opinions and sympathies. A Catholic of the most scrupulous strictness, he could nevertheless see the Holy Spirit in all goodness, truth and beauty; and there was something in all his words and manners which was at once a rebuke and an attraction to all who could only aspire to be like him.'

In spite of the rift between them caused by the difference in religion, it is clear that Hopkins warmed to the genius and character of Bridges' poetry. 'If I were not your friend,' he wrote to him, 'I would wish to be the friend of the man who wrote your poems. They show the eye for pure beauty and they show, my dearest, besides, the character which is so much more precious.' Hopkins never flatters, but the letters are scattered with acknowledgments such as these. 'Your precious little volume is to hand—

also to head and heart, breathing genius everywhere, like sweethearts . . . '—' Besides the feeling richness of phrase in so many places, the sequence in it, and the constant music, it does me good, the freshness and buoyancy and independence I find in your poems, marked with character throughout and human nature.'

He considered a true humanity the most precious of all qualities in style, and this he prized in the poems of both Bridges and Dixon. He recognised the feeling for the tragedy that is kneaded up in human life which Dixon's writing displays, and Dixon on his part found Hopkins's poems unmatched 'in the power of forcibly and delicately giving the essence of things in nature, and of carrying one out of oneself with healing.'

With Patmore the relationship was different. Here there was no religious cleavage, but the older poet, in spite of a high regard for Hopkins's character and respect for his judgment, could make nothing of his poetry, a fact which appeared to trouble him more than it troubled Hopkins. Their friendship, Professor Abbott points out, in a sense came too late, when Patmore was growing old and set in his ways. Yet 'though Patmore failed to understand the worth of the poet, no one discerned more clearly or stated more emphatically what was, for Hopkins, his crown of endeavour, the prevailing goodness of the priest.'

There is something touching about the complete submission of the older poet who was, as a rule, far from being a docile character, to the searching criticism of the younger. It is true that Patmore had himself invited this criticism; yet he can scarcely have expected it to prove so detailed or to probe so deep. Hopkins regarded Patmore as a master of phrase, he admired his insight and his imagery, though at times it seemed to him that the feeling did not flush the

language, resulting in a lack of fusion which is never absent in Hopkins's own poetry. As regards the matter of Patmore's poetry, his critic was unhappy when he tolerated vanity in women, a fault which made Shakespeare's Beatrice almost a hideous character for Hopkins, as modesty made Desdemona beautiful; and he confessed himself ill at ease when a certain jesting humour crept into Patmore's treatment of the profoundly delicate matter of divine love. Elsewhere he took him to task for writing on a philosophical matter without philosophic precision. 'Paradox persisted in is not the plain truth and ought not to satisfy the reader.' This was not mere carping. It was a labour of love to read and criticise so carefully and his subtle fault-finding, Patmore said, was the greatest praise his poetry had ever received.

Of the three volumes of *Correspondence*, the first, which contains the letters to Bridges, is the most intimate and therefore the most interesting, but all three bear the stamp of the same unique character and help to a better understanding of the poet. The remaining letters include a number to Mowbray Baillie, a rationalistic friend who nevertheless felt the attraction of the 'irrational,' and who after Hopkins's death paid him the compliment of saying that one of his greatest regrets in no longer believing in a second life was that he wanted so badly 'somewhere, somehow, to meet Gerard Hopkins again.'

Two legends have arisen round the figure of Hopkins. The first is that his poems were not appreciated by his Victorian contemporaries and it rests with our more enlightened age to rescue him from oblivion. It is true that his sprung rhythm in a sense anticipated the *tempo* of our day, though he himself traced it back in English literature to the choruses of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. It is however unfair to say that he was not recognised by his contemporaries. To begin

with, very few of them had the chance of reading him, since of his own choice he did not write for publication. Of those who did read him and were competent to judge, Robert Bridges and Canon Dixon rated him very highly. It is true that Patmore only suspected excellence—'veins of pure gold embedded in masses of impracticable quartz,' but his admiration for the essential *quality* of the poet is at least as true an appreciation as the imitation of externals. Imitators should bear in mind the following passage from a letter to Bridges :

'I sent you a sonnet, on the Heraclitean Fire, in which a great deal of early Greek philosophical thought was distilled ; but the liquor of the distillation did not taste very Greek, did it ? The effect of studying masterpieces is to make me admire and do otherwise . . . So it must be on every original artist to some degree . . .'

Hopkins's prosody grew out of his thought. First, the inspiration ; next, the development into a finished poem ; last, the discovery and definition of inherent rules.

The second legend, which dates from longer ago but still persists, concerns the slow martyrdom of Hopkins, as a poet and a man, in the Order to which he belonged. No one has put this point of view more emphatically than C. N. Luxmoore in a letter to Arthur Hopkins written after Gerard's death.

'Humanly speaking,' he writes, 'he made a grievous mistake in joining the Jesuits, for on further acquaintance his whole soul must have revolted against a system which has killed many and many a noble soul ; but what matters the means compared with the undoubted result ? Any wood will do for the cross, when God's perfection is thereby reached. To get on with the Jesuits you must become on many grave points a machine, without will, without conscience, and that to his nature was an impossibility.

To his lasting honour be it said he was too good for them . . .

In the *Life*, Father Lahey, S.J., hotly denies the tragic portraits which have been drawn of an Englishman exiled in Dublin, slowly dying of loneliness, drudgery and despair. 'Nothing,' he says, 'could be more foreign to the sincere and candid accounts of those who lived with him.' The *Letters*, however, and some of the later sonnets, show us that he did in fact suffer from loneliness and drudgery, and at times came near despair. Another Jesuit Father writes in a *Page of Irish History*, quoted in a note to the first volume of the *Letters* :

'It has been alleged that he ought never to have been a Jesuit ; but his love for his Order was intense, and we are permitted to believe that, though he had many trials to endure, they were mainly due to his highly-wrought temperament. If this be so, it is probable that in other circumstances he would not have had a brighter existence, and perhaps would have been deprived of the deepest consolations of his life.'

There is probably more justice in these remarks than in either of the extreme points of view quoted above. The religious vocation, which to his literary friends seemed to limit and thwart his genius, yet trained and disciplined his mind on lines which led to its most characteristic expression.

BAPTISM OF WAR.

BY LEO KAINRADL.

It is a fortunate gift of human nature that one can quickly forget bad times once they are past. Thus, while the grim pictures of war have almost vanished from my mind and return but seldom like the pale shadows of some bad dream, I can still recall many cheerful and vivid memories of good comradeship and the humours of campaigning as clearly as if they had happened only yesterday. And perhaps a small incident of a remarkable nature may here be rescued from oblivion as worthy of record.

It was in late autumn of 1917, after the break through at Caporetto, when the Austrian troops were approaching the Piave without opposition. After a few slight skirmishes with the enemy rearguard, our regiment was now taking a short rest in Ponte nelle Alpi, a charming place set in the midst of orchards where the fruit still hung in plenty. Among the rich booty of recent fighting there were several officers' chargers, to be shared between the battalion and company commanders. A small pedigree grey with a dark head fell to my lot. We christened him Othello, and decided to try him out at once. So three of us—Captain Reinisch, the Adjutant, and myself—trotted briskly out into the country-side, in the peaceful autumn sunshine. Before long we caught sight of a group of cottages, dominated by a tall building not unlike a castle within a high, square boundary-wall. At the entrance-gate was a crowd of noisy soldiers, clamouring for admittance from a solitary woman and defying her attempts to turn them away.

The senior officer of our party, Captain Reinisch, charged up to them, restored order with a sharp word of command and sent the marauders off to their neighbouring bivouac. The frightened woman overwhelmed us with thanks, and explained that these tough customers (they were Bosnian infantry) had wanted to force an entrance into the building in search of comfortable quarters. The house, she told us, was a mental home, and in any case it was crammed with patients; the doctors and almost all the nursing staff had fled in panic, leaving her and a few devoted maids to shoulder the whole weight of nursing. To convince us of the truth of her words, she gave us a warm invitation to see over the home.

She was a tall woman and in her day must have been very beautiful. She addressed us in broken German, while our Italian was perhaps even more halting; but we managed to understand each other, and her frankness won our immediate sympathy. We accepted her invitation at once.

We made our way through the large silent garden, where the last asters and dahlias were still in bloom, and tied our horses to the railing of a fountain. A broad stone staircase led into the house and to the spacious wards. Everything was spotlessly clean and tidy. There were wards for men and women. The patients stared at us with the sad vision of a distorted brain. Among the men were a few sick soldiers partly in uniform, and we were met by black looks as their clouded minds recognised the enemy; but the firm, quiet tone and glance of our companion kept them in check, and we passed through each ward without disturbance.

Just as we were taking our leave, the Padrona said to me: 'We have a German woman in the house, not a patient, but a young mother. She was chased out of her home in panic just before her time came and took refuge with us. Now

her child has been born. Perhaps you would like to talk to her? She comes from Tyrol, from Cortina, I believe, where she was married to an Italian. Unfortunately, the husband has been missing for some months, presumably taken prisoner or maybe killed.' Our sympathies were roused for this poor woman and we asked to see her.

We found the young mother lying in bed in a small, bright room, with a healthy baby beside her. It was not long before we heard further details of what the matron had already told us. To my surprise, I discovered that she was the sister of an Ampezzo guide, who had been my companion some years before in the Dolomites. It was a tragic story which she told me, all the more tragic from her uncertainty about the fate of her husband and her own forlorn condition. But what oppressed her most was the thought that in this mad-house her child would have no chance of a Christian baptism, for the local priest had fled together with the medical staff. Not a day went by, she said with tears, that she did not pray that God might work a miracle and send a priest to baptise her child.

'This miracle, dear lady,' said Captain Reinisch, 'shall happen now. We will get your baby baptised immediately, and I and my friend here will be the godfathers. Our Adjutant shall ride straight back to the regiment and bring the chaplain along. Please get everything ready for the service!'

Barely half an hour later the Adjutant and the Chaplain came galloping up. In the meantime, the maids had quickly decked out the room in the most charming fashion, with a beautiful crucifix and flowers in pots and vases. But at this moment the matron took me aside and asked me anxiously whether this was not a practical joke. Here was a man in service uniform and cap; was he really a genuine priest, or

merely another of our officers : I told her that she need not be troubled, for she would soon see the genuineness of his orders. I may mention that the Austrian field-chaplain always took with them a serviceable travelling-case containing their robes and Church vessels, and this case could also be opened out to serve as an altar.

Meanwhile the chaplain had changed into his clerical robes and now entered the small room where we were all waiting for him. The maids sank to their knees in deep reverence, and a voice murmured : 'Che bell' uomo !' Yes, our chaplain was indeed as handsome as Apollo. Alas, he was soon to fall a victim to the war.

And now the baptismal rite was performed with due solemnity. Captain Reinisch and I held the baby in turns, and with the sprinkling of water and the joyful tears of a delighted mother a small Christian was brought into being. The priest drew up a proper baptismal certificate in Latin, which was witnessed by us two proud godfathers. Before we left, a sergeant from the field-bakery close by arrived with a loaf of the exact size and weight of the baby. We laid this chivalrous gift with a small sum of money beside the small Alois (for this was the name chosen by his mother), and to the accompaniment of thanks and blessings we left that house of gloom, where now a ray of purest happiness had entered in.

Two years later I heard from friends in Trento that our godchild and his mother were both flourishing—a welcome sequel to this strange baptism of war.

Munich.

CHILDREN OF THE RECTORY.

BY KATHLEEN COLLISON-MORLEY.

I.

THE Reverend John Wood brought his young wife to the parish in June. This, his first cure of souls, lay in a remote county, encompassed by hills. All day they had driven further and further west, into the heart of a green silence. Finally, they left the main road and plunged into a maze of lanes. Over the broad banks, crowned with flowers, they caught a glimpse of steep little fields where swathes of mown hay pervaded the air with sweetness, and young corn brimmed hedge-high. The car sheared its way through twin waves of fools' parsley that foamed in their wake. Already the hanging woods brooded in a blue hush of midsummer. Everywhere was luxuriant growth, and tranquillity; greenery so lush and brilliant that it resembled a medieval illumination; a peace so profound that it might have emanated from the rapt landscape of a dream. At the cross-roads, where moor and valley met, they halted.

'There is your new home,' he said.

Cecilia looked across a tumbled foreground to the church tower soaring between cypresses. Thatched cottages huddled like a flock of sheep round the gables which marked their pastor's house. It stood in a snug glebe. The rounded crests of oaks and one glistening copper-beech tree marked the garden.

'How lovely,' she murmured, 'and how quiet! It looks like something remembered in old age.'

'This is the parish boundary,' said her husband briskly, memorising the appearance of ditches, road-metal and telegraph poles so that he could start on well-informed terms with the rural district council. 'There used to be a chapel here, those humps of turf are the foundations. It was built to keep the dragons and unquiet spirits of the moor at bay. They say that it is still haunted by the ghost of a wild boar.'

Flies hummed amidst the bracken fringing the tilled land. Wind-warped trees cast a flickering shade. The grass was as fine and close-cropped as velvet. Cecilia, moved by one of the impulses which she had resolved to suppress in future, leaned sideways to kiss him. He looked so young and brown and ardent. It was hard to think that they might both grow old there.

'It proves that the power of the church is waning,' she said. 'You'll probably find yourself laying ghosts and ducking witches before you know where you are. I don't suppose they've even *heard* of the Women's Institute here.'

'Then you will have to inaugurate it, darling. You'd enjoy being a pioneer.'

Their eyes kindled at each other's glance, for they had not been married long. Then Cecilia grew grave. 'Oh, John, promise me to remain like this. Don't ever become pompous. I simply couldn't bear it if you took to intoning your responses at me. It's a frightful responsibility to marry a parson.'

'I hope you won't find it too much for you. There's the parish visiting, and the Mothers' Meetings, and teaching the Sunday school.'

'Besides keeping you human.'

His resolute face softened. 'You'll have no difficulty in

that. Do you realise that I am also Lord of the Manor? Isn't it a joke? It is a perquisite dating back to the thirteenth century, I believe. One imagines that, in the old days, these incumbents lived like country gentlemen. It is a fairly rich living, as you know.'

'Thank goodness, or we could not have been married for years.'

'Yes, I hardly dared hope for such luck, and I mean to work hard here. No slacking just because it's an easy billet. Although the population is so sparse, there's a lot to do. The last rector was fearfully slipshod, drank himself to death, they say.'

'One should not listen to village gossip,' said Cecilia primly. 'How dull it would be if one didn't. Oh, John, I must remember all my good resolutions about being dignified and discreet and rather awe-inspiring! Do you think I shall succeed as a parson's wife?'

'Goose,' he said. 'I want to prepare you for the rather primitive conditions of the Rectory. I've had the carpenter in, and the place whitewashed and scrubbed. You won't discover any rotten floors or damp ceilings; but I couldn't afford to do much. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners only pay half the expenses, you know. There are no modern amenities.'

'And no modern horrors, like hideous little villas and chain stores,' Cecilia added contentedly.

'No main water, but the well is a good one. I've had it tested for purity. No electricity. We'll have to live by lamp and candlelight.'

'So peaceful and romantic.'

'But tiresome, remember. Lamps take an age to clean and fill. I must break it gently to you, darling, but there's actually a geyser in the bathroom.'

Cecilia uttered a little shriek, reflecting that this was possibly her last chance of irresponsibility. She meant to be a pattern of stern common-sense henceforward. 'How terrifying! Does it look kind? I always think you can tell a lot from the expression; efficient but temperamental, rusty but harmless, or frankly intimidating. Do you think I can find some kind woman to teach me its ways?'

'I've engaged Mrs. Rugg, the sexton's wife, as a daily cook. She's kind enough, I should say. A most cheerful and motherly body, I thought her. He's also the carpenter. His family has lived here time out of mind. I got all my local information from him. He talks of my only notable predecessor as though he were still alive.'

'When did he live?'

'In the time of the Civil War. He was a fine preacher. Rugg showed me an old book of his sermons. He was also a man of action. He raised a troop of Royalist Horse in the parish, and went into exile with Charles II. He died here after the Restoration. Rugg wants me to repair his monument. Its shockingly neglected, like everything else. Young Rugg has been working manfully in the garden, darling, but I hardly like you to see it yet. It was a wilderness. Everything grows so fast here that, once you let a place go, it becomes a jungle in no time. Well, we must drive on. I told them to expect us for tea. Mrs. Rugg is providing a girl from the village to be trained as housemaid. A mere child, she is, but seems willing.'

Cecilia wondered if it could be her whom she heard sobbing as they skirted the high Rectory wall. Somewhere in the woodland behind it, a child was crying. The faint desolate wail struck an alien note in that rural symphony of birdsong and lowing cattle. Surely it was quite a small child, much younger than the leaving-school age? No

doubt it had strayed into the Rectory garden from one of the cottages. If the place had been neglected lately, all sorts of little invaders, foxes and children and rabbits, might have crept into the grounds. Elated as she was, the sound haunted her as they swung through the gate and saw the Rectory.

It stood in a cup of rising meadowland, as green and smooth as a piece of Wedgwood ware. It was built of red sandstone; the front Victorian-Gothic, the kitchen quarters Tudor. Uniformity of material gave it a certain air of compactness. It glowed cosily, among lawns freshly-scythed and shrubberies newly-lopped. Stumps showed where John had felled trees in order to do justice to the magnificent copper-beech screening the church. Sunlight poured into its open windows, on to the weedy gravel, over the mossed roofs. The whole scene, steeped in golden light and silence, was as tranquil as doom.

'What a kind little house!' Cecilia exclaimed. 'It looks as though it had always been happy.'

That night, when she wandered round the moonlit garden, she heard children crying again.

II.

On their first Sunday, Cecilia heard her husband read himself into his new parish. The fine weather continued. Under such halcyon skies, amid such radiant greenery, the world appeared newly created. The red soil nourished a rampant vegetation unknown to the austerer quarters of England. Its growth was almost sub-tropical. She loitered in the walled garden after morning service, with the warmth penetrating to her very bones, for she was chilled by the damp church. She thought that the Rectory might have been empty for years instead of months. As yet,

young Rugg had scarcely tamed the wilderness with his axe and hoe. Unpruned peach-trees straggled against the mellow walls. Bindweed throttled the gooseberries and currants. Early raspberries were ripening on canes so choked with groundsel that they were screened from thieving birds ; but not from other raiders, apparently. She noticed a whisk of ragged skirts in their midst.

'Hullo,' she called. 'Who are you?'

The movement ceased, as though petrified with the fear that all wild creatures know. Two little girls, brown and lean like gypsies, peered at her warily. There was a watchful silence.

'Us bain't doing no harm,' said the elder at length, defiantly. Although she spoke with a soft west-country tongue, her voice had the inflections of breeding.

'Mary won't let us steal,' piped the younger, whose scratched legs were bandy from too much walking. 'Taking berries bain't stealing. Nobody picks them 'cept the birds. We'm hungry.'

Cecilia smiled. 'When I was small I was always hungry, especially before dinner.'

'Us won't have no dinner.'

She stared at them, shocked. The parish had seemed poor, being entirely agricultural, but not needy. She and John were agreeably surprised at conditions. Thanks to a scrupulous landlord, the villagers were adequately housed. Each cottage possessed a thriving garden. The farmers allowed their men skim milk and firing. The school-children looked healthy. Yet these little girls were pitiaibly thin and furtive. Their poise came from proficiency in dodging blows. Cecilia was familiar with that hardy wretchedness ; she had worked in the East End before she married John. Surely they could belong to no cottagers in that neighbourhood?

They might be the children of the itinerant clog-makers who camped in the alderwood beyond the mill.

'Are you gypsies?' she asked.

They shrank from her. Their berry-smeared faces contracted in a spasm of fear. 'No, we'm not vagrants. Don't set the dogs on we. Please not to call the dogs.'

'I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing,' she said, noticing their local misuse of pronouns. 'I've got no dogs, except a tiny puppy. You'd love him. He is very playful. You can eat as many berries as you want, then I'm going to take you into the house and give you a good meal. There's roast beef and gooseberry-tart. Do you like gooseberry-tart?'

They glanced at each other, half-eager and half-suspicious.

'Mrs. Rugg makes awfully good pastry,' Cecilia added persuasively.

'Mary wouldn't like us to go indoors,' said the elder. 'She'd say it was begging. She won't let us beg.'

'Who is Mary?'

They answered in chorus.

'She's our sister.'

'She looks after we. She has gone to ask the old men to give us some food.'

'That's not begging 'cos it's our due.'

'We'm hungry,' explained the baby wistfully.

'Where is your father?' Cecilia asked.

'He's in the army, with our brothers, serving the King.'

'Little brother is in there,' said the baby, pointing to the rose-tangled churchyard.

'And your mother?'

'She's dead,' they said.

Cecilia regretted her curiosity. She would have to tackle John about this really dreadful case of neglect, as soon

as he had finished discussing church-renovation with old Rugg in the vestry.

'Come with me and we'll find Mrs. Rugg,' she said. 'Dinner must be nearly ready.'

She thrust open the garden-door which hung drunkenly on rusty hinges. It gave on to an overgrown shrubbery. The laurels were the oldest she had ever seen, gaunt and black and uncanny. Their leaves shone like dark metal. Nothing grew in their shade. They framed a telescopic view of the Rectory, the brighter by contrast, dreaming among its sun-drenched lawns. She heard the children pattering behind; their bare feet skipped with the pathetic irresponsibility of youth, however unhappy. Once on the drive, John's firm rapid stride overtook hers. She halted to greet him.

'I'm going to feed some of your lambs,' she confided, unable, once they were together, to believe that anything, even cruelty to children, was so terrible as it had seemed in his absence.

He tucked her hand under his arm. 'There you go, collecting livestock already,' he said gaily. 'First the puppy, because you thought the tinker was not kind to it. Now lambs. What has their owner been doing to them?'

'Neglecting them, John.'

'Shameful, but you'll have some farmer prosecuting you, my dear. Sheep-stealing is a serious offence. Men have been hanged for less.'

'I'm serious, darling. I mean these stray children. I found them in the walled garden. They were eating raspberries. They seem to be starving. I thought you'd be able to investigate their case. They are alone in the world. Oh, isn't cruelty dreadful? It makes me feel quite sick.'

He looked at her gravely. 'I see no children,' he said. When she turned round, neither could she.

III.

Cecilia, gauntleted and gum-booted, was clearing weeds from the neighbourhood of the copper-beech. There was something about nettles, she considered, which spelled the last word in neglect. They affronted her sight every morning when she gazed, enraptured, over the dewy garden. At night, while escorting the puppy on his last walk, they invariably stung her ankles. John being absent on a visit to the moorland farms, and young Rugg busy among the vegetables, she had tackled the job. She knew that both men would consider it beneath the dignity of a parson's lady. She only hoped that no callers would surprise her. A rustle in the willows made her straighten guiltily. It was the fox-terrier puppy, pouncing in mimic fury beside the stream. At her call, a tousled head rose apprehensively among the forget-me-nots. There were the children, three of them, so presumably Mary had returned from her mission.

'Hullo,' said Cecilia, assuming that they were old friends by this time. 'I'm sorry you had to run away the other day. Don't go now. I'd like somebody to talk to me. I'm tired. I've been working very hard.'

They faced her across the trickle of ale-brown water that tasted of the peat whence it had sprung. Evidently they had been drinking. The baby's peaked little face was dripping. Mary, recognisable by her air of resolution and her height (she must have been at least twelve years of age), held a sopping rag in one hand. She was the most ragged of the trio, but the cleanest. Cecilia fondled the puppy.

'Don't be frightened of him. He only wants to play.'

'We used to play here, before you came,' said Mary accusingly.

'Oh ah, we played house under the tree. Our brothers climbed it.'

Mary turned on her sister. 'Susan, ye're not to say "Oh ah." It's common.'

'Sorry, Mary.'

'I heard somebody crying again last night,' Cecilia continued conversationally. 'Was it you?'

The youngest child nodded.

'She has lost her rag-baby,' Mary explained.

'We've a-searched for un,' said Susan, whose dialect defied both her own and Mary's efforts to correct it.

'How very sad. Do you think it might be among these nettles? I'll have a look. Leave it to me, you'd only get stung.'

With her shining rubber boots, Cecilia swished back and forth. Old tins came to light and a broken crock, but no doll. She was much impeded by the puppy, who kept sheltering under her skirts. His hackles lifted, and his milk-teeth bared in a perpetual snarl. He seemed to be terrified of the children. They watched him gravely, wary as he. Then Mary moved off and spread her rag to dry upon a pollard willow. It was the baby's shift. She worked with as much solemnity as if she had been playing at dolls. She reminded Cecilia of the prematurely-aged little mothers of the slums.

The others squatted in the rank wet herbage and began to gather a posy. Evidently nature had intended Susan to be plump. Her small wrists were still encircled with bracelets of baby fat, but her cheeks were as hollow as her sisters'. She was the most timorous, starting at sudden movements and shrinking from the puppy. Under happier circumstances, she would have been the gayest member of the family, being the communicative one. The black-eyed baby was the least untidy. She wore a full-skirted frock with a creased lawn collar, and her curls were free of tangles.

Weather and wear had faded all the children's clothes to an inconspicuous drabness.

'I'm afraid there's no doll here,' said Cecilia, after an exhaustive search. 'I wonder where it could be. Do you remember leaving it anywhere?'

'It is in the nursery,' Mary said. 'I keep telling her that we hid it in the cupboard before we left, but she won't believe me. She wants to go and fetch it. We can't make her understand. She does not seem to mind anything else, only losing her rag-baby. She can't go to sleep without it. She is only a baby, you see.'

Cecilia saw, only too well. 'Which room do you call the nursery?'

'Your room. We saw you leaning from the window one night, and brushing your hair by lamplight. We can see quite plain from the garden, before you draw the curtains.'

'Our mother used to brush her hair o' nights,' Susan interposed, with her fists full of forget-me-nots. 'It was like yours, only longer.'

'She made us keep our toys in the cupboard under the nursery window-seat,' Mary pursued, charmed into sudden garrulity by the recollection. 'We had to tidy them away before bedtime. There were bricks with letters on 'em, and a card game, and the hornbook . . .'

'That was no plaything,' Susan objected.

' . . . And our brothers' old hobby-horse. His paint was mighty worn, but he had a long mane. I used to comb it. I was only little then, of course.'

'Of course. Did your brothers play with you?'

'They were too big. William was grown up, and Henry went to Oxford. He was sent down by the Parliament. Frank used to give us rides on his back, he was always laughing. Tony had lessons with Father. He was monstrous

grand, learning Greek and Latin and mather—matter—mattermatics . . .’

‘I can plait straw mats,’ said the baby, catching the last word. ‘Mother showed me how.’

‘She taught me to make clay birds and beasts for Anne,’ said Susan proudly.

‘Who is Anne?’

‘She was our sister.’

‘She’s dead,’ said the wistful baby.

‘Drowned in the sea with Mother and Nanna.’

‘Be quiet!’ cried Mary fiercely. ‘I’ve told you not to talk about that.’

Susan sprang to her feet, convulsed with alarm. ‘Hark, there’s somebody a-coming!’

‘It’s only my husband,’ said Cecilia soothingly. ‘He’s rather nice. He likes children.’

‘I like him,’ the baby piped. ‘He looks a kind man, Mr. Rugg is a kind man. He made me a boat once. We all sailed it on the pond. It has gone now.’

‘The pond has gone, too. It used to be here, you can still see the shape, but the old man drained it.’

‘He was a bad man,’ said the baby.

‘He took our father’s place, and set the dogs on us when we came back.’

Cecilia heard the screech of brakes as John halted his car in the stableyard. Then he shoved open the grating coach-house doors, and one banged to again, being ramshackle like all the outbuildings. ‘I must run and help him,’ she said. ‘Don’t go.’

But they had gone when John returned with her sickle, to finish reaping the nettles.

IV.

One evening of autumn Cecilia sat beside the parlour window, listening to the portable wireless which had been a wedding-present, and dreaming of the newcomer for whom she was knitting a minute vest. The damp lawns steamed in the dusk. An old-fashioned rose-bush swung its heavy blooms like censers against the wall. The church tower loomed benignly against a sky of clearest apple-green. In that dim hour, the brooding tranquillity characteristic of the Rectory garden was intensified. Soil and sod exhaled sweetness. The copper-beech glowed in a shaft of lamp-light ; its low branches as sharply-defined as stage scenery. The whole landscape looked unreal, melting and changing with the ebbing day. The disembodied music enhanced Cecilia's mood. She felt detached, alone in a world of shadows ; for John was absent at a parish meeting, and the housemaid partnering Mrs. Rugg at a whist-drive.

Her thoughts were all of John ; his keenness and capability, his triumphant knack of friendship, the happiness that he drew from her, his vitality. The kind old house would make an ideal birthplace for his child who lay, increasingly heavy, beneath her heart. So many children had been born there.

Her meditation was interrupted by a suave voice announcing the weekly commentary on world affairs. Cecilia felt them to be too remote from her own charmed circle of suspense. She turned the switch. In the ensuing silence she heard again the faint desolate sobbing that often broke her rest. She flung open a window.

'Mary, Susan, what is it?' she shouted. 'Come here.'

The shadows moved. Two children materialised from them, the lamplight blanching their sunburnt faces.

'It's Cecill, she won't go to sleep,' Mary explained.

'Where is she?'

'In the barn. We made her a bed of hay. It is very wet in the garden to-night.'

'Us bain't doing no harm,' said Susan nervously. 'The old man let us bide.'

'Don't speak so broad, Susan. He was too blind, he didn't see us. Not after that first time when he caught us in the house, and set on his dogs. I keep telling Cecill we must never go there again. They were big dogs.'

Susan shuddered.

'The puppy has gone out with my husband,' said Cecilia. She rummaged in her work-basket. 'Here is something for you. I looked under my bedroom window-seat the other day. You were quite right. There is a cupboard, but it had been papered over. When I opened it I found a lot of dust and cobwebs and, right at the back, this.'

She held out a rag-doll, faded beyond resemblance to anything human, but dressed in a bright woollen frock and cap. There was a silence.

'I made her some new clothes,' she added, fearing that, according to the curious ideas of childhood, she had destroyed its charm. 'I thought she might feel cold in the garden, after staying indoors for so long.'

Mary darted away, still speechless. Susan began to whimper. In a moment her two sisters returned. The baby was blinking and flushed with tears, her hair stuck full of hay. She held out her small grubby hands.

'You are kind, kind,' she cried. 'Oh, Mary, she's found at last!'

'Now you won't sob any more o' nights,' said Susan.

'Thank her, Cecill. I'm for ever telling you to mind your manners. She is only half awake, you see,' said Mary apologetically.

The window slammed in a sudden draught as John entered the parlour. His presence always seemed to bring a breeze. He bent to kiss her, smelling of heather and tobacco. Cecilia found herself blinking, as Cecill had done.

'Tired, darling?' he asked with his new solicitude. 'I've got something interesting to tell you.'

'So have I. I've been talking to the children again.'

John filled his pipe. 'Curious that I never see them. They seem to haunt the place.'

'Yes, they've gone now. They are frightened of you, all except the baby. She thinks you are kind.'

'Am I?'

'The kindest husband in the world. Dearest, isn't it odd that her name should be the same as mine? The others call her Cecill. A diminutive, I suppose. We're quite good friends now. They were very pleased with the doll.'

'A most insanitary toy, I should have thought. Now, look what I have discovered.'

Enthusiastically he unwrapped the parcel he was carrying. It exhaled the musty odour of age, like that of the doll which Cecilia had just restored to its rightful owners. It was a book, bound in moth-eaten leather. Its pages were stained and tattered. A fine nervous penmanship here emerged, and there vanished into blots.

'You'll have to get this re-bound and mounted on silk,' said Cecilia, poring over it. 'I can hardly read a word.'

'Rugg and I have been deciphering it. He is fearfully excited. He found it in the belfry when he was clearing out. It must have been there for years, thrown down in a corner. He thinks that his own ancestor probably wrote the first entries. There is a tradition that his family have always been sextons and churchwardens here. It gives one a great sense of continuity to come to a place like this, I must say.'

'The past seems to be living beside us,' Cecilia murmured.

'Do you feel that, too? Look, the records begin in 1622. There's a mention of Dr. Byam's induction; he succeeded his father in the living, Rugg says. He married the daughter of a neighbouring parson, Mary Fleete, and they had ten children. Here's the register of their christenings; William, Henry, Francis, Anthony, then two sons who died in infancy, Mary, Susan, Anne and Cecill.'

Cecilia put a hand to her heart. 'Cecill!' she repeated faintly.

'Yes, she was the youngest. Anne was "drowned in the midst of the sea," as it says over here. The ink has faded, but Rugg knows the story. Apparently, when Dr. Byam raised a troop of loyal horse, it included his four eldest sons . . .'

' . . . So that was why Henry was sent down from Oxford by the Parliament.'

John was too engrossed with his discoveries to heed her. 'Well, I suppose that all the remaining villagers were hostile, so Mrs. Byam fled with her nurse and children to Wales. The ship foundered, and she was drowned . . .'

'Poor woman. She had hair like mine, only longer, and used to brush it in the evenings.'

'No doubt. It is rather curious about the surviving girls. They must have been saved from the shipwreck and wandered back here, starving, I expect . . .'

' . . . And terrified, John. People set their dogs on them, big dogs.'

'It was a brutal age, my dear. They probably existed in the woods. Rugg says they were full of vagrants in the old days. When he talks about "old days" one can never quite place the period; he was harking back to a raid of the Danes in Ethelred's reign, last week. Anyhow, there's

another entry further on. Wait a minute. Here it is. In sixteen-forty-seven someone noted that Mary Byam "petitioned the Parliamentary Commission on behalfe of herselfe and the rest of Mr. Byam his children" for food. They were granted a fifth of the tithes. I suppose their father's Roundhead parishioners refused to feed them. Not much help came for "Mr. Byam his children," I'm afraid.'

'Yet there was one Rugg left,' said Cecilia eagerly. 'He was kind. He made a boat for Cecill.'

'Meanwhile, during the Commonwealth this living was usurped (one can call it nothing else) by a Public Preacher. Most irregular,' John continued, warming to an indignation three centuries old.

'He was "the old man," a bad man, according to Cecill,' said Cecilia in parenthesis.

'He seems to have done nothing, let the whole parish go to rack and ruin. Not unlike my predecessor, I imagine. He was succeeded by a young man who must have been a decent sort. I deduce that because, after the Restoration, when Dr. Byam had returned and died here, he married the youngest daughter, Cecill. Now here, darling, we come to the most curious fact of all. His name was John Wood.'

'That accounts for everything. Why the children came back to us, why Cecill liked you, why the magic worked. Oh, John, those poor hungry bewildered children, striving not to beg nor to "speak common," and only regretting the lost doll! Now they have found it, perhaps they'll rest content.'

She never saw the children again.

AMBITION.

BY C. E. LAWRENCE.

By it the angels fell . . . and simply to mention those of the celestial hierarchy whose downfall half-emptied Heaven and established Pandemonium (as a prelude to the Machine Age) is to discover that our subject brings us into touch with some who in their times were highly exalted. For of kings, emperors and tyrants, whose records are written darkly in the pages of history ; of Attila, Alexander, Cæsar and Napoleon ; of such as Louis Napoleon, that charlatan, and Cardinal Wolsey, that worse than unscrupulous would-be Pope ; as well as of others whose aims were venturesome beyond their powers and whose failure was absolute I sing—or would sing if prose were not easier.

But while the company met in discussing this subject may be of the best, as measured by the standards of Mrs. Leo Hunter ; in other than the shallow social values it is not so good, for, in studying those who have been ambitious, we are brought to witness glaring defects in manners and personal character, which the best people should not have—and haven't.

Undue self-confidence, vanity and a hard sort of pride, as well as selfishness, are essential to the ambitious in all the degrees of their aspiration ; while the greater exponents of that 'grievous fault,' as Mark Antony called it, have also given expression to baseness, remorselessness and cruelties which blackened whole chapters of the records of mankind.

Beside those darker characteristics, something of the energy of genius also is required to direct the approach of

the greatly ambitious to power. But before completing this detail of one of the world's first weaknesses and outstanding forces it may be well to consider a few examples—always the more entertaining part of an essay.

I return, therefore, to the leading names in our earliest group; to Attila, Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar and Napoleon. Those are but four of the multitudes who have suffered from their selfish complaint, yet they stand out from others of the kind through the compass and determination of their ambition and its success—for a time. Each of them, with the unerring eloquence of fact, preaches the moral of the ultimate failure of the ambitious and reveals the folly, ludicrous and pathetic, that it is, of climbing a ladder to catch hold of a star.

Attila, the Hun, who in his tempestuous character was very like Marlowe's Tamburlaine, appears to have been a despot of limitless passions and leonine strength with the mind of a horned bull. He had such power, through the determination of his will and the rapt obedience of the wild armed hordes who followed him, that his lightest word could be expressed in terror. He ransacked provinces, overturned thrones, made kings captive, and from widespread plunderings and tribute gathered to himself wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, and before the end, as with most of those who complacently accepted the adulations of peoples prostrate before them, came to see himself as divine.

One wonders how such self-accepted deities bore the aches and grosser infirmities to which at times all flesh is subject. Historians, however, reveal little or nothing of that. They have preferred to talk of battles, murders and the degenerate love-affairs of self-willed monarchs and of those who would be kings, rather than of the effects of some royal indisposition on the tempers of a Court and the destinies of nations.

Certain Frenchmen in their anxieties to excuse Napoleon and not justify those English, have declared that an untimely attack of indigestion was the cause of his defeat at Waterloo ; but evidently one can't have everything put into the history-books.

In his case one prefers to remember the ' thin red line,' and the squares of glittering British bayonets, with the slow but sure approach of Blücher.

When Attila had touched the supremacy of vanity by taking himself to be divine, he was slain, stabbed as legend tells us, by his wife on their wedding-night. Which brings us to the point of discovery that everything associated with vaulting ambition in the end must come to the ironic downfall ; as the climax to grandiloquence or of cocksureness is almost certain to be the grave man's pity or the giggle of a fool.

And no irony could be greater than the circumstance that the pride and magnificence of conquerors should be snuffed-out with the carelessness that may go with the death of a starved cat. ' The paths of glory lead '—not only to the grave, but often to that which is less excellent ; for the grave is an honourable institution and in spite of the silliness and ugliness with which—in its futilities how pathetically !—it may be decked, is the only entirely democratic institution. The paths of glory happen also to lead to anti-climax.

Alexander the Great was of finer clay than Attila—being simply heroic and, in brief, a gentleman. There was gold in his spiritual substance. He had the heart of a man ; he loved his comrades and was loved by them. The scene of his dying in failure after his old faithful soldiers had filed past him to bid him their last farewell is one of the more moving episodes of literature and history. For him to overrun the world and then to sigh because, having passed the

Indus, there were no more worlds for him to conquer is a travesty which, if it were true, must have made the gods laugh. Yet, unlike Attila, on the whole he was morally and with inspiration great and seems not to have hurt his natural fineness with anything petty.

Yet his quest was that of an inspired fool who spent himself in vastest dreams, chasing the glinting shadows that beckoned him over seas, rivers, mountains, marshes and the wildernesses wherein men may easily perish ; but never did he falter in himself and when the worst happened to his army sought first to relieve the hardships of his soldiers.

His greatness was such that he inspired others who were spiritually great to follow his courses. The chivalrous Montrose wrote on his copy of Quintus Curtius—

*As Philip's noble son did still disdain
All but the dear applause of merited fame,
And nothing harboured in that lofty brain
But how to conquer an eternal name ;
So, great attempts, heroic ventures shall
Advance my fortune, or renown my fall.*

It is ironical that Alexander, richly endowed with the qualities that comprise greatness and one of the best of those who have marched through the sun-glare and dust of world-adventure, should also have been small enough to believe that he too was deified, although in his case there was justification for the idea ; as, beside his lofty dreams that had found some achievement, he knew that the gods of the ancient world, whether in Greece, Macedonia, Rome, Syria, Persia or India, were closely enough linked by legend with mankind to be taken as their brothers of the half-blood ; while they were known to share the faults and passions of humanity and especially their vanities and lusts.

It was only in their alleged miracles, fantastic and un-

convincing, that they showed any positive difference from humankind, and with them those marvels were generally of the order that are nowadays available in the cabinets of the cheaper conjurors.

So far as Alexander was concerned, his extraordinary success and charm were sufficient to induce those who best knew him to believe that he might have worked miracles if he had chosen to do so, and when death brought its realities to the deserted body those who had loyally followed him were willing still to believe in his immortality. Through his sincerity Alexander almost defeated the irony of the gods ; which shows how nearly he came to the conquest of the world.

Yet he did not escape that form of the crowing counterblast which most sorely would have vexed him ; for, as some allege, his skull was taken from the sarcophagus that contained his bones and is to be seen on a cushion of velvet on the glass shelf of a museum at Istanbul. Yet is that circumstance really ironical, or merely a vulgarity with no mirth to sweeten it ; as assuredly is so with the skull of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, exposed, it is said, in a museum somewhere in Austria ?

Structures of bone, those houses of minds gave forth from the one visions of conquest too vast for this Earth to satisfy and from the other inspirations of the happiest music, delicate, ethereal, in fantasy laughing and lovable, that also, through 'Don Giovanni,' held echoes of scorn to point the final absurdities of lustful man brought up sharply against the eternities.

If those skulls, said to be 'on show,' are genuine ; then surely the dust of humanity once-radiant matters nothing and only the unseen glory counts. Shakespeare put the truth of it on the lips of Hamlet : 'Alexander died, Alex-

ander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust ; the dust is earth ; of earth we make loam ; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel ?'

But was there, indeed, nothing else ?

Imperious Cæsar was of lesser substance and safer clay than Alexander of Macedon, though had he lived longer he too must have assumed the usual divinity. He had greatness—greatness enough to appreciate the disciplines that come from being deaf in one ear. With his tramping legions and through powers of brain and the skilled uses of the arts and science of the soldier, he over-ran the best parts of the conveniently available Earth, and when notoriety or fame or glory came to him bore it with such prudence that he affected to ignore it. Yet that did not save him ; for although upon the Lupercal he thrice refused a kingly crown, we know as well as did envious Casca that he would have taken it gladly—as also Cromwell in his time would have—if he had been confident of his ability to keep it. As it was, the refusal did not save him and the hurrying course of events gave Antony the opportunity to make one of the finest efforts of mob-oratory that gods (in the theatre) or groundlings have listened to.

Cæsar's end was untidy, yet also in its simplicity great, as with his 'Et tu, Brute !' and a look of mingled surprise and reproach at the noblest Roman of them all, he muffled his face in his mantle and with the indifference of despair in greatness, fell.

*O mighty Cæsar ! Dost thou lie so low ?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrink to this little measure ?*

Dante paid him his final and the supreme tribute ; for

in the last depths of the Inferno, with Judas as their companion, we find Brutus and Cassius dangling together by the frozen river Cocytus and close to the eternally-defeated Satan, there to share the contempt of the universe for ever because of their treachery.

Probably we know too much about Napoleon, the last on our brief list of the supreme conquerors of what have proved to be dazzling and blood-stained shadows. It is sad to realise how the records of his greatest, lightest, most foolish deeds and sayings have been ransacked, often for cheap purposes. Nothing of him has been too small for his admirers and enemies to drag into the open and contemplate. His indigestion, his weaknesses over women, his personal indiscretions, meannesses, ingritudes; the ways in which he was morally dominated, for the time, by his Empresses Josephine and Marie Louise; his unclean habits, his impatience with subordinates and the partialities that led to their failing him at crises, deserting him—Murat, Marmont, Bernadotte—in the very infamy of worldly caution.

Such details that disgust and sadden have almost more prominence in the modern conception of Napoleon's character than his brilliant generalship, his dashing strategical movements and his established code of laws, on which volumes upon volumes have been written, printed and read, to leave behind them little more than vague impressions of noisy, battering campaigns drenched in blood, that ended in the *débâcles* of Moscow and Waterloo.

The gods in their ironies had opportunity to shriek with laughter over him and did so; for morally and physically he was small and they mocked him in ways that would have vexed him exceedingly if he had known of them. It was not with the *sauve-qui-peut* of Waterloo and his galloping from the field in his carriage, or through the careless indignity

of the unlettered grave at St. Helena ; but in the after-revelations when his coffin having been brought to France was opened and his poor body revealed—with a toe-nail grown long through the leather of the boot. Could there be a more contemptuous last note than that on the pretensions of greatness ?

*The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers ; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.*

In their several ways those conquerors had genius. Others who were greatly ambitious had not the strengths which could bring their almost-justification, as with Louis Napoleon, who revived the Empire of his uncle to make it clattering and glittering, a thing of suspicions and over-coloured shreds and gauds and gilded patches ; until his vanities and self-deceptions brought it tumbling down and himself to the climax of Sedan and the forgetfulness of Chislehurst. Adventurer and cheat from the beginning, he struck attitudes, but had no spiritual fineness—not even his uncle's faith in the glamour of an imaginary star—to lift him out of the intrigues of selfish politics.

Others like him have rattled sabres and flourished mailed fists in peace-time to find them break or crumble under the trials of war. All that is only so much show and noise. The truth of greatness rests on moral stature. Many of the mistakes of history have been due to the faults of little men in high places ; moral dwarflings decked with the glamour of Kingship or a knighthood too heavy for their strengths and circumstance.

I will now proceed to the superlatives known as Women,

who also can be ambitious and even ruthless in the determination to secure what they want, though nearly always, in fairness be it said, their purpose in being so is to benefit others and especially their lovers, husbands or sons. In their selfishness generally they are selfless, though also when strongly caught by the passions, sacred or profane, of love they may provide the exceptions that prove the rule. In that service there is no extreme to which some women will not rise or sink and no necessary sacrifice they will not make ; while, unlike Orpheus, if put to a test like his, they would probably keep to the last letter of the bargain made and, however tempted to do so, not look back prematurely at the loved one and thereby destroy the desired ending.

This truth is seen in the Helöise of medieval history and in the Juliet born of the knowledge of a poet's heart—both heroines in their spiritual completeness being equally true. Each would have given her dearest hopes for the benefit of the one beloved. As also Nancy Sikes would have done—and Bill Sikes' dog ; but he seems not to have been a lady, and, therefore, is not entirely suited to our example.

But we cannot overlook such glaring exceptions to the rule of unselfishness as Cleopatra and Catherine of Russia represent. They were notorious and limitless in their passions, while ambitious also to preserve their enthroned privileges. It must, however, be remembered that in intellect and spirit they were less women than men ; while as lovers they had something of the tendency of the female spider to devour her mates when their crucial purpose was fulfilled. Cleopatra and Catherine did not go so far in their wanton cruelties as the legendary Semiramis is said to have gone ; but the uncertain records of their personal history are heavy with selfishness and fickleness. Even the very recent death of her great lover, and one of the supremest

in the courts of passion, did not prevent Cleopatra from casting eyes of selfish calculation on the victorious Octavius ; in the desperate hope of his sympathy saving her and her ambitions from the destruction she had brought on herself.

One other woman, however, must I name who does illustrate the spirit of self-sacrifice and of freedom from ambition that generally exalts her sex. Joan of Arc, inspired by the visions and voices of saints or, as others have declared, by pagan spirits that haunted the Fairy tree at Domrémy, had her mission ; and no aspiration could have been purer than hers to rescue France from the invaders that overwhelmed it. She followed her inspiration to its end, and her mission fulfilled, with the King, that little-worthy Charles the Seventh, crowned at Rheims, implored those with her to allow her to retire to her native village and the home that her womanhood longed for.

They would not let her go, and although she felt that her inspiration to victory was ended with what had been accomplished, she went on to the agony and glory of her tragedy. Yet what an opportunity she had—if she had been selfishly ambitious—with the soldiers behind her, trusting her and confident in her supernatural strength and mystic fortune, to take and occupy even the throne of her country ! Happily for the wonder of her story she was too simple and great for that !

The drift of this study carries us now far down, it may be with something of a shock, to regions that seem uncertainly to suggest the dinginess of the proverbial backstairs. From the heights to which the Pucelle has carried us we come to an interlude almost of comic smallness—to those pettiest of ambitious people, of whom the chief, to flatter them with that brave unimportance, are the Snobs.

Although the aim of such creatures is of the narrowest, sometimes in their self-assertiveness they are tremendous ; and the worst of them can be very Berserks of bad manners in the determination to secure acquaintance with those who seem to them to matter socially.

The kindly Thackeray, who was better able to analyse and make his old-fashioned fun of Snobs because confessedly he was himself one, was fascinated by them. In most of his writings the Snob is shown as popping-up his oiled and silly head to look for those whose parasite or social tyrant he might be. In those days snobbery was rampant. Its examples strutted or crawled in all the showy places and nobody was more clearly their patron than glorious George, the Prince Regent. A story is told of his meeting Tom Moore in Ireland and asking if he belonged to the Moores of Waterford. 'No, sir,' answered the little poet who himself loved overmuch to hobnob with greatness, 'my father was a Dublin grocer'; whereupon the First Gentleman in Europe turned on his heel and went.

Snobs, however, are not the only small-natured ones who are ambitious. Greed for self-advancement is even more odious than the lighter forms of toadyism, because faults worse than vanity must go to its fulfilment. Envy of others is amongst those faults, and disloyalty, and often the worst ingratitude. Nearly always, where such creatures have risen, it has been on the backs and through the kindness of others ; but almost as certain as the law of gravitation they forget the help they had received the moment their object is attained and through that infirmity are apt themselves to come croppers. In like manner often the selfishness that urged them to climb prevents their helping someone else lest he become a rival ; while the occupant of a desired place must be got out of it by hook or by crook, and generally,

if managed at all, it seems to be done by crook. In politics this fault has been marked—but here we cast no stones ! That world is too full of glass-houses set among brickfields.

I will end this less-attractive aspect of the enquiry with an axiom that applies to all the ambitious, whether they are absolute or insignificant. In their dictionaries two words are missing : 'Impossible' and 'Thank-you.'

Yet what is it really for—that fuss and petty scheming, it may be even with abject cringing to get on ; those vulgarities of push, pretence and selfishness ? As the purpose sought varies from the sordid to the wrongly sublime, so must the character of the reward vary ; while always a part of the allure must rest in the excitement of the chase ; as is so even when it means the slow poisoning to death of an elderly woman for the sake of her savings, as was the crime of the murderer Seddon, whose ambition in life was nothing better than to secure a larger amount of invested wealth for himself and the social importance that is supposed to go with it.

Years ago Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, the popular 'Sir Garnet' of the eighties, having been asked what in his view was the supreme reward of the soldier, answered, 'Glory.' Well, harvests of military glory have been reaped—and spilt and lost—in the last twenty-five years and famous names proclaimed the world over. Yet the glory of it has proved doubtful in colour and strangely transient, truly a 'bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth' (as is so also with Garnet Wolseley) ; and, to judge from the volumes written by some of them, he is a rare general whose record is found to be impressive after a time. With all the publicity of wireless, biographies, autobiographies, and that of the Press, with its laudatory obituaries, the sum-total of such

glory amounts to little more than that of the village Hampdens and mute inglorious Miltons who sleep in the churchyard of Gray's *Elegy*.

In contemplating the incidence of Ambition one is bound to dwell chiefly on its final effects, the fruits which when tested are nearly always like those of the Fallen Angels of *Paradise Lost* who, at the moment of their seeming triumph that followed their counter-attack after the great disaster, with Eve deceived and Adam betrayed, found it turned to ashes and the applause of victory degraded to a dismal universal hiss.

Sometimes the social climber or careerist is able to convince himself that, despite the fact that he has not succeeded, he is yet not disappointed and even may convince himself, in the face of the evidence to the contrary, that he has achieved what he aspired to ; for necessarily his vanity must be as the hide of a pachyderm enclosing a bladder of wind. Often the disappointment felt is expressed in blame of others who possibly had blocked the way or not given the encouragement expected ; while it is a frequent effect of too-evident pushfulness that it is answered by the passive resistance of those who, had they been tactfully dealt with, might have helped.

But enough of the small and very small fry ; the importances that have no importance ! Let us return to that aspect of life's harlequinade which shows the final curtain falling on the efforts of the ambitious.

*Abbas, Episcopus, Princeps,
Pulvis, Umbra, Nihil,*

is the epitaph on the tomb of an Italian cardinal, once the abbot, bishop and prince of the Church, who had come to

that ultimate reality of dust, shadow and nothing. No other words could more effectually paint the vanity of the end of glistering circumstance. There was his Eminence, seated by the altar in the magnificence of his exalted office, robed, jewelled and veiled from common eyes by the clouds of incense that rose before him, a symbol of the prayers of humanity that ceaselessly ascend to the Most High ! Hard, indeed, was it for that generous prince of the Church, when approached with the humble supplications of rich, poor, small and great, and whose authority affected the welfare of innumerable souls and extended into temporal regions also, not to feel superhuman at times, and even closely akin to the saints and angels.

But the wisdom of heart and mind that enabled him to rise, evidently also helped him spiritually, when the flesh of his body was growing weary, wrinkled, stained and diseased, to read aright the truths of worldly conditions—

*Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor, crooked scythe and spade.*

Old age brought its preachments to him who knew well that Father Death has the most eloquent of all sermons to deliver ; and so it was that the Cardinal, the wisdom of whose epitaph is simple and profound, came to see how princeliness in Church or State must fade and the last aspects of this estate of Earth, however glorious in the world's sense, be dust, shadow and nothing.

The irony of the end of all things earthly—for of the ultimate recompense in Heaven necessarily no lay man can confidently speak—is eloquent especially over those of proud spiritual authority ; and to one who regards it with

no intention of irreverence and only in its simplest human aspects, nothing can be more profoundly saddening than the exhibition of the skeleton of Saint Carlo Borromeo in a chapel of the crypt of Milan Cathedral. Decked in his Cardinal's biretta and robes, it lies in a glass sarcophagus and is surrounded by jewels, illuminated by electric lamps. The bones are exposed, not only to the adoration of the faithful but to the open-mouthed curiosity of trippers from all the world over.

It is true that on the occasion of my visit, before the mechanical device which revealed the relics of the saint was applied and the unhappy show began, the priest-attendant in the chapel donned a surplice, to mark the sacred solemnity of that exhibition. When he was so attired, he set in motion the machinery that, with automatic perfection, revealed the contents of the sarcophagus and then sat on a stool—to read a newspaper. It was one more touch of the irony over worldly greatness that may be expressed in indifference.

How much more consonant with the Cardinal's character and memorable life-work would it have been if his tired bones had been laid to rest in God's earth, there to dissipate—their mortality to immortality—under the gentle ministrations of Nature, than be exposed to the curious for a fee, especially as at my visit German tourists—not of the Cardinal's branch of the Faith—sprawled their arms before the relics and jabbered over the commercial value of the jewels displayed. 'Sic transit Gloria Mundi!'—words used in the ritual that precedes the coronation of a Pope—is a fitting comment on all that.

The trouble is that such vulgarities as are disclosed with the relics of Saint Carlo often follow the elaborate circumstance that goes with the greatness of ambitious churchmen. 'Servus Servorum,' the term habitually used by every Pope

to represent the spiritual humility required of him who attains to the supreme office, should also—if only to escape the ironies—be the ideal accepted by other religious ministrants, and so enlink the humblest deacon or deaconess in the lowliest Puritan assembly with the most ornate of any hierarchy, be he Abbas or Episcopus or Princeps.

For such brave humility was verily the garment of St. Francis that everyone may wear.

And what in the end does it all amount to? To aspire is surely right; to seek to influence one's contemporaries in a cause, to work as Wilberforce did, and John Howard, and Elizabeth Fry, and Father Damien—and not only those whose purposes were of spiritual and religious value, but those also who aspire to serve publicly in and out of politics and lead their fellows in practical life, improving the everyday, is commendable. Fame is worthy and the work that brings it may be good. Its value rests in the motive and quality of the aim.

But the ambition which in mere vanity and without scruple strives to reach the not-worth-while is, as we have seen, a chase of bubbles, and every bubble, however brightly glittering, is bound in time to burst; while all such huntings and scrambles, so frequently wearying, bruising and dusty, must end where the paths of glory, and those less than glorious, lead to.

When that end is marked by nothing but a tombstone, the irony often is emphasised by its assertion of virtues that never were entirely there; and so the pious fraud is strengthened to continue until the winds and rains obliterate the vanity and nothing is left for the years to look upon but a worn, illegible stone standing crookedly among weeds.

MIRAGE.

He went into the desert on a silly youthful quest,
 For he heard the coyotes calling from the great wide West.
 There was heat and dirt a-plenty, and the devil kept the pace,
 But he hurried on a-seeking for the dream within his breast.
 Tranquil is the moment when the heat-waves race—
 Malapi, alkali, and trails of silver lace.
 He rode a pinto pony, and he tinkled like a bell—
 Silver-mounted cowboy in the desert's spell:

The mountains were a-dancing where the storm-clouds pass,
 The mountain streams were flowing through a green and fertile
 dell

Where the cattle were a-grazing in the cool lush grass,
 And ducks and drakes were sporting in the deep morass.
 The snowy peaks were pointing to the chilly blue sky;
 A cabin in the foreground with a dame hard by;
 The pine trees were a-singing their same sad song,
 And the quaking aspens were playing with the parched and eager
 eye;

A woodpecker drumming as a drummer beats his gong,
 And a kildeer calling— But it couldn't last for long!

Lonesome was the winding trail and bitter was the dust,
 But the long way—the lone way, whispered 'Must!'

Sagebrush and greasewood and buttonsage forever;
 Jogging through the rimrocks with his heart in trust—
 Green and grey and grey and green where the skylines quiver,
 Flowing on and onward as a silent frozen river.

Incense was a-fuming as the sandalwood of Rome ;
 Quiet came and whispered in his ear of home.
 ' Home ! ' there came a whisper in a tone not heard ;
 Through tall shades—the long shades a night-hawk whirled.

Brooding on the future and a dull dry-lake ;
 Riding, riding, riding in the mustang's wake,
 He heard a mournful piping in the brush obscured and low—
 A thin pipe—a shrill pipe : he thought it was a fake :
 Mirages come to fool a man and man must say them no.
 And he jogged along unheeding where the Texas-tommies blow.

This poet was a seeker for the Holy Grail of Truth ;
 He sought the great adventure through his gorgeous crystal, youth ;
 But he found the great illusion where the coyotes cry,
 And he jogged along till sundown through the malapi.

CULLEN JONES.

San Francisco.

A TALE FROM TIMBUCTOO.

BY BERNARD ROWLEY.

I HAD this tale straight from the lips of Mr. Hoye, who for the last nineteen years of his life was vicar's warden in my own parish, and whose veracity should therefore be beyond question. Mr. Hoye graciously allowed me to take notes of his story as he told it to me, but he charged me not to make it public during his lifetime. A vicar's warden, he said, cannot be too careful.

This condition I have loyally observed, for Mr. Hoye departed this life only last month, in the eighty-ninth year of his age. He was a fine old gentleman, tall and broad-shouldered still despite his years, and bearded like a Capuchin friar. Perhaps by reason of his long residence in the remoter districts of Africa his speech was slow, thoughtful, and deliberate, as if he were still out of practice in the use of his mother-tongue. When in the mood he would tell strange stories of his adventurous past; so strange, some of them, that but for his age and position one might have been tempted to suspect him of romancing.

Yet is it truly if platitudinously said that truth is stranger than fiction; and I for one have the utmost faith in his integrity. And besides—— But let Mr. Hoye's story speak for itself.

It was (I see by my notes) in the year 1894 that Mr. Hoye, at that time a middle-aged trader engaged in free-lance commerce on the West Coast of Africa, took up temporary residence in Timbuctoo. (They spell it Timbuktu now,

but to do so in this story would be an anachronism.) Exactly what branch of commerce Mr. Hoyer was engaged in, I never discovered; nor is that in any way relevant to this tale. He was, in his own words, simply a 'trader,' and I gather that the word has a wider connotation in Africa than in this country.

However that may be, it was in 1894 that Mr. Hoyer made a great journey across the southern Sahara from Dakar, and, after sundry adventures and mishaps which need not be related here, established himself, with the consent of the French military authorities and the consequent toleration of the native population, as a kind of contractor and general emporium-keeper in Timbuctoo.

At the present day, I believe, Timbuctoo is only a degree or two less civilised and accessible than, say, Tangier or Oran. It is approached by wide concrete roads, over which six-wheeled lorries and cars can travel at high speeds, while the city itself is as orderly and well planned as any to be found in the French colonial empire. But in 1894 Timbuctoo was still an almost legendary city, a place of mystery and glamour to the outer world. Its curious name, combined with the publicity given to its occupation by the French only a year earlier, had served to make 'Timbuctoo' something of a household word in Europe. The name had been avidly seized upon by music-hall comedians. No humorous paper or magazine dared risk printing an issue without at least one reference to it. Such catch-phrases as 'Go to Timbuctoo!' or 'I wished him (or her) to Timbuctoo!' were popular euphemisms to be heard on the lips of all and sundry—indeed, they are not even now quite extinct. In short, Timbuctoo was definitely 'news,' as we should say to-day.

Mr. Hoyer procured for himself a somewhat pretentious

house on the river side of the city, just sufficiently far removed from the stench and squalor of the *bazaars* to be habitable by a white man, yet not too remote to be convenient for trading. The chief disadvantage of the site was its comparative loneliness, which compelled Mr. Hoyer to stay always at home after dark lest thieves should break in and loot his precious stock. But against this drawback must be reckoned the considerations that Mr. Hoyer was the one and only Englishman in Timbuctoo, that his knowledge of the French tongue was inadequate for any extensive colloquing with the officers of the garrison, and that in any case Mr. Hoyer had but little use for Frenchmen.

It must have been a lonely existence, but trade was so good that Mr. Hoyer forbore to grumble. And so life went on, monotonous and uneventful, until——

One night Mr. Hoyer broke with custom and dined out, his host being the Military Governor of Timbuctoo. Had it been simply a social invitation Mr. Hoyer would undoubtedly have made his excuses, but it so happened that he had wind of a highly lucrative contract, and for that reason he decided to take the risk. So he locked and bolted his house and store-rooms and betook himself to the Governor's quarters.

Now the Military Governor was a convivial soul—one of those large, laughing, bearded Frenchmen who are the salt of the Gallic earth. He recognised in Mr. Hoyer a kindred spirit, and the latter got his contract with far less difficulty than he had expected. Then, to seal the bargain, the pair of them sat down to demolish a case of most excellent wine. Neither got drunk; but as glass after glass and bottle after bottle of the wine disappeared, Mr. Hoyer's determination to make an early start back to his own house slowly ebbed away. When at length he submitted himself to a

hearty but hirsute valedictory kiss and felt his way out into the star-spangled, blue-velvet night, it must have been nearly midnight.

A cold wind blows off the desert at night in those parts, in startling contrast to the oven-like heat of the day, and Mr. Hoyer felt in tremendous spirits as he made his way homeward. The heady fumes of the Governor's wine, mingling with the pleasant coolth of the air, gave him an unwontedly carefree feeling. The contract that he had secured that night would outset to an infinite degree any depredations caused by robbers on his present stock, so his mind was calm and untroubled.

There was no moon, and the streets were unlit, but Mr. Hoyer had had the foresight to bring with him a hurricane-lantern to guide his footsteps in the required direction. He came safely out of the main *bazaar* and turned down the long, winding by-way at the end of which his house was situated. The whole city seemed shrouded in slumber, and he encountered no living creature. Breathing a sigh of relief—for a midnight stroll through any native city is inevitably attended by a certain amount of risk—Mr. Hoyer turned at last into the compound of his own house. Here again, all seemed to be quiet.

He was half-way up the path when, out of the corner of one eye, he caught a glimpse of something white moving in the darkness.

Instantly his brain was on the alert. His first impression, naturally enough, was that there were thieves about after all. Turning swiftly, he drew his revolver that he always carried, and shouted, '*Who goes there?*'—in English first, by instinct, and then in French and in the local dialect. Even as his voice rang out through the silent night he saw the white figure again, and he noted with surprise, not unmixed with

apprehension, that instead of being in flight it was standing motionless, perhaps twenty yards away.

'Who goes there?' Mr. Hoye barked again, his finger still hesitating on the trigger.

'Oh!' came the reply, in a voice that shook Mr. Hoye to the depths. 'Oh! It's—it's me——'

Mr. Hoye halted in sheer amazement: for the voice that he heard was the voice of a woman, and it was speaking the soft, cultured English of the West End of London. Even the lapse in grammar was in accord with the usage of Mayfair.

It is not easy for us, perhaps, to put ourselves entirely in Mr. Hoye's position. But if we remember that Mr. Hoye himself had personal and positive knowledge that there was not one single white woman within several hundred miles of Timbuctoo at that date, we shall at least be able to gauge the measure of his surprise, if only approximately. Not even the French officers of the garrison had yet been permitted to bring their wives or mistresses to an outpost so newly occupied. And in any case, this voice in the dark was as English as Big Ben.

For a few seconds Mr. Hoye stood irresolute. He laughingly confessed when relating this story to me that it cost him no small effort to display even this slight and negative form of fortitude, for his hair was erect and his heart was in his gullet. But then at length something seemed to snap within him, and, lantern in one hand and revolver in the other, he advanced firmly on the apparition.

One must suppose that it would have been something of a relief had the said apparition vanished into thin air or resolved itself into some extraneous yet reasonable object. But that is exactly what it did not do. It remained completely stationary until Mr. Hoye came up to it, and then

revealed itself to be precisely what its voice had suggested—namely, a white woman, young and beautiful in a rather hard way, with masses of rich auburn hair piled high upon a shapely head (for they neither shingled nor bobbed in 1894) and wearing a manifestly Paris-made evening gown of shimmering white, cut low upon her bosom in the fashion of those days. There was a rope of fine pearls about her neck, and in the pale glimmer of the hurricane-lantern Mr. Hoyer caught the glint of several rings upon her fingers. He also noticed, vaguely and uncomprehendingly, that in her left hand she was clutching a small square of white figured linen.

‘Now may God have mercy on my wicked soul!’ Mr. Hoyer ejaculated aloud, as his incredulous eyes took in these details. ‘Who on earth are you, and how did you come here?’

But the woman stood so still, and gazed at him with such a strange expression in her china-blue eyes, that once again the fear came upon Mr. Hoyer that this vision was but the figment of a disordered imagination. Nerving himself to the effort, he presently slipped the revolver into his pocket and stretched forth a hand to touch her. With a sharp intake of breath the woman drew back out of his reach, but not before his fingers had made grazing contact with the cool flesh of a bare white arm.

‘So—you’re real, are you?’ gasped Mr. Hoyer uncertainly. His nerves were on edge, and he went on almost fiercely: ‘Who are you, I say? Damn you, are you dumb? Tell me who you are, woman, and how you came here?’

‘I—I don’t know,’ was the hesitant reply, after a tense pause. ‘I don’t know who I am—or where I am—or how I came here.’ Her voice (and it was still the voice of May-

fair) rose to an angry sob, and she pressed a jewelled hand against her forehead. 'I—I can't remember anything—anything at all. Where am I?'

'You can't remember?' Mr. Hoye shouted, trying vainly to curb his impatience. 'But—surely you must know who you are! Your name—what is your name?'

'I don't know,' the woman answered in a frightened whisper. 'Oh! My God! What has happened to me? I—I can't remember——' And then, without warning, she toppled forward in a dead faint.

Mr. Hoye caught her, and somehow or other succeeded in carrying her indoors. Her weight, and the expensive perfume that pervaded her, served to bring it home to him that, however impossible any other suggestion might seem, she was at least no phantom. She was, in fact, a tall and finely made woman, and even the gigantic Mr. Hoye found the task of carrying her by no means inconsiderable. He judged her to be perhaps thirty years of age.

He laid her on his own bed—the only bed in the house—and lit a brass table-lamp to supplement the light of the hurricane-lantern. Even had his brain been functioning normally it seems doubtful if he would have known how to deal with a swooning woman. As it was, he could only stand foolishly watching her until, within a few minutes, she began to recover consciousness of her own accord.

Then Mr. Hoye remembered a precious bottle of cognac stowed away against some such contingency as this. He ran for it, tossed off half a cupful, neat, to steady his own nerves, and then presented a similar dose at the pale lips of the now-recovering woman. She accepted it in silence, took a couple of dainty sips, grimaced as the cheap spirit assaulted her throat and palate, and then sat slowly up to face her host.

'Feeling better?' Mr. Hoye inquired gruffly, as he took the cup from her.

'Better—yes.' She answered him as if by instinct, and her blue eyes never once left his own. 'I—I fainted, did I not?'

'Yes,' said Mr. Hoye.

'So foolish of me,' she commented, flicking her lips into the ghost of a conventional smile.

'I might easily have done the same thing myself,' said Mr. Hoye candidly. 'Nearly did, as a matter of fact, when I heard your voice. I still don't understand, madam, who you are, or how—'

'No more do I,' she put in, glancing nervously about the dim, dusty, untidy room. 'I have simply no idea how I came here, nor even where I am. Where—where *am* I?' she ended, a note of hysteria in her voice.

'Why, this is Timbuctoo, madam,' Mr. Hoye informed her, in much the same tone of pained surprise as a London policeman would employ if asked a corresponding question in Piccadilly Circus.

'Timbuctoo?' she repeated with a start. '*Timbuctoo*? Oh, impossible! Timbuctoo—in Africa, you mean?'

'That is so,' said Mr. Hoye, eyeing her curiously. 'In the Sahara desert, to be precise. So far as I am aware, there is only one Timbuctoo in the world—and some would say that even this one is superfluous.'

'But—but—oh, I don't understand. How did I come here—to Africa even, far less to Timbuctoo? This is absurd! You are not deceiving me?'

'Indeed I am not, madam.'

'But it's impossible! Am I dreaming, or is this really happening?'

Mr. Hoye shrugged his broad shoulders. 'If you're

dreaming, then I'm dreaming too, madam : and that doesn't seem to make sense, somehow.' He paused and passed a hand over his brow. 'Have you—er—remembered who you are yet, by any chance? My own name, incidentally, is Hoyer—George Hoyer, at your service—and I am a trader here.'

His guest watched him intently, as if she were slowly assimilating what he had told her. Then she bent her brows in thought, and peered with unseeing eyes into the gloom.

'Who am I?' Mr. Hoyer heard her mutter, after an interval. 'Why, I am Alice, of course—Alice—Alice Settringhame. Yes, that is it. Alice Settringhame. Alice Settringhame.' And she continued repeating the name over and over again to herself, like a child learning a lesson.

The name stirred a faint chord in Mr. Hoyer's subconscious memory. He was far from being an expert in the English aristocracy, but he had a vague idea that Settringhame was the family name of some peer or other. He drew a bow at a venture.

'The Honourable Alice Settringhame?' he suggested quietly.

'Yes—yes—that is it!' she replied eagerly. 'You know me, then? I am—I was—I am the second daughter of Lord Rusper. But—'

'Well, that's something,' said Mr. Hoyer cheerfully, though he said it more to encourage her than because he felt any nearer a solution to the major problem. 'Your memory is on its way back already, you see, Miss Settringhame. We'll get this all straight in a minute, don't you worry!' And he forced a little laugh.

But even as he spoke he saw her start once again, as she glanced down at her left hand. He followed her gaze and saw that there was a wedding-ring on the third finger.

'It looks to me,' he said gently, 'as if you were married, you know. Now let's see if we can't work this out. If you are Lord Rusper's daughter, then Settringhame must have been your maiden name. But what about your husband—can't you remember his name too?'

'Why, yes, of course— Of course I'm married! How foolish of me to forget that! I was married—oh, long ago, I think. . . . I married—yes, I married Martin: Martin Joyce-Secretan, you know. Yes! So I am Alice Joyce-Secretan now. But I can't understand—'

'Never mind,' Mr. Hoyer comforted her. 'We're getting along famously, you know. We'll have the whole business explained in next to no time now! How long have you been married—can you tell me that?'

'The twenty-second of May,' she answered like an automaton. 'Yes, that was the date. I remember it perfectly. . . . What year is it?' she asked suddenly, as if stricken by a new fear.

'Eighteen-ninety-four: the tenth of April, 1894—or rather, it must be past midnight now, so I suppose it must be the eleventh. Can you remember which year you were married? Was it last year, or—'

She shook her head. 'Oh, no. We were married in—let me see—yes, in 1885. That is nearly nine years ago, isn't it?'

'Nine years next month, if you're sure you're not mistaken,' Mr. Hoyer confirmed. 'But, if you'll pardon the liberty of my saying so, Mrs. Joyce-Secretan, you hardly look old enough to have been married nine years.' (But he mentally crossed his fingers as he uttered the lie. In the light of the oil-lamps the woman looked fully thirty now—and a bad-tempered thirty at that.)

'Thank you!' She snapped out the words coldly, as

if suspicious of his sincerity. 'There is no mistake. I married very young. Too young, perhaps.'

'You must have,' Mr. Hoyer rejoined smoothly. 'Very well, then : that disposes of one of my theories. You can't be on your honeymoon trip. Perhaps your husband has business out here, and has brought you with him ?'

But again she shook her head.

'Certainly not !' she declared emphatically. 'Why should Martin come to this dreadful place ? He has no interests here, and even if he had I should certainly have refused to accompany him. The Joyce-Secretans,' she went on, with more than a trace of hauteur, 'do not engage in commerce. We are of independent means.'

'I see,' said Mr. Hoyer apologetically. He was beginning to take an intense dislike to this young woman, now that the first flush of surprise was past. There was something hard and unlovable about her ; a suggestion of snobbish uncharity which showed through her physical beauty. Mr. Hoyer felt a resentment—unreasonable, perhaps, but a resentment nevertheless—against her intrusion into his quiet, monotonous life. For all that he had often enough longed, in the many years of his exile, to meet and enjoy the society of an Englishwoman again, he felt a sense of relief in the knowledge that this particular Englishwoman was nothing to him. He also began to feel sorry for her husband.

'Look here,' he proposed, after a pause. 'Since we don't seem to be making much progress by working forward, suppose we try working back for a change. Ten minutes ago, or thereabouts, I found you wandering in my compound. You remember that ?'

'Ye-es. I fainted, and you brought me in here.'

'I know—but that is working forward again. I want to go *back*, and find out how you got into my compound.'

When we've got that we may be able to discover what you are doing in Timbuctoo. You see the idea ?'

'I suppose so. But——'

'Just a moment, Mrs. Joyce-Secretan. Let *me* ask the questions, please. Now, how did you get into my compound? Down the road from the mosque of Sidi Yahia, and in through the gates? Can you tell me that?'

She gazed at him stupidly, frowning in perplexity.

'I cannot,' she replied. 'I do not remember anything before you called out to me. Or at least——' She hesitated.

'Yes?' Mr. Hoyer prompted her.

'Oh, I suppose I'm mad,' she cried in a choking voice. 'I must be mad! And yet I could have sworn——' Again she left her sentence unfinished.

'Of course you're not mad,' Mr. Hoyer put in kindly, though without inner conviction. 'Tell me what you could have sworn. Every little helps, you know.'

'But I must be mad, or dreaming!' Alice Joyce-Secretan wailed feverishly. She got up and began striding about the room. 'Listen, Mr. Boyes——'

'Hoyer,' amended Mr. Hoyer.

'Mr. Hoyer, then. You tell me that to-day is the tenth of April, 1894—or at least that that was the date until a few minutes ago. *And you are right!* How do I know? Because I remember seeing that date—the tenth of April—on the silver calendar on the writing-table in my boudoir this morning. Yesterday morning, that is.'

'Your boudoir?' Mr. Hoyer inquired sharply. 'What boudoir? Where? Not here in Timbuctoo?'

She stamped her foot and rounded on him.

'Here? Certainly not!' she snapped viciously. 'I have never been in this horrible place before in my life. I mean

my own boudoir, at home, in London. In Mount Street, Mayfair——'

'Hi! Steady!' Mr. Hoye protested. 'You know, you're getting confused again. I mean, you couldn't possibly have been in London this morning, and here in Timbuctoo to-night!'

'I tell you I *was*!' she insisted, her temper rising with every word she spoke. 'If yesterday was the tenth of April, 1894, then I was at home, in my own house, yesterday morning. I was—I was—I *was*!—— I don't care what you say. It all comes back to me now. I'm beginning to remember perfectly. I can tell you how I spent every minute of the day.'

'You can, can you?' asked Mr. Hoye softly. 'Very well, Mrs. Joyce-Secretan. Perhaps you will do so?'

'I had breakfast in bed!' she exclaimed, in a high-pitched hysterical voice. 'Marianne, my maid, brought it to me, as usual. Then I took my bath, dressed, and went shopping. I could even tell you the names of the shops, and what I bought,' she ended obstinately.

'Never mind that,' said Mr. Hoye impatiently. 'Can you remember having luncheon?'

'Yes—at the Splendide, with Lady Lisbon, Colonel Curtice, and Mr. and Mrs. Hartmann-Herbage. And afterwards I went home again, and rested till tea-time. Martin—my husband—came in then, and drank a whisky and soda. We—we quarrelled a little, as I fear we often do. I wished him to take me to the theatre. He wished to stay at home, as he had asked some friends in—men friends, of course, who I knew would sit smoking and drinking with Martin till midnight or later. I have no patience with my husband's friends, Mr. Hoye: an idle, good-for-nothing lot of wastrels, I consider them, and I never hesitate to let my husband

know my opinion of them. Since we have been married I have done my best to—to wean Martin from them, but he deliberately flouts my wishes !’ Here she stamped again, and her eyes flashed coldly. ‘For the first year of our married life I thought I had succeeded, but of late my husband has seemed to prefer their company to mine—an intolerable state of affairs.’

‘Still, better men than lady friends, perhaps,’ Mr. Hoye suggested pacifically.

‘I disagree with you entirely !’ she flashed back. ‘If my husband were that kind of man, I should at least know how to deal with the situation . . . However, to return to this evening—yesterday evening, that is. Eventually, of course, I got my own way. Martin promised to take me to Her Majesty’s Theatre, though with no very good grace, I fear. He put off his friends, and I went upstairs to dress—’

‘What colour frock did you put on ?’ Mr. Hoye interjected sharply.

‘Why, my new white satin—’ She had answered before she saw the point of the question, but now this occurred to her, and she looked down at the gown in which she was clad. ‘*This* frock !’ she continued triumphantly. ‘This very same frock that I am wearing now ! That proves—*proves*, does it not ?—that this can only have happened a few hours ago.’

Mr. Hoye sighed perplexedly, and again passed a hand over his forehead.

‘It looks like it, certainly,’ he admitted doubtfully.

‘Of course it does !’ said Mrs. Joyce-Secretan. ‘Well, I came downstairs, and my husband and I dined together. Then we drove to the theatre in our brougham, and stayed till the end of the performance. I enjoyed it, but Martin was—sulky. Afterwards he said he was tired and wanted

to get to bed, but I insisted that he should give me supper.'

('Poor fellow,' Mr. Hoyer murmured under his breath. His sympathy for Mr. Martin Joyce-Secretan had been growing more lively every moment. He reflected that if he, Mr. Hoyer, had utterly tired of this woman's superficial charms in about nine minutes, her husband must be in a parlous state after nine years of marriage. The very thought appalled him.)

'We went to the *Café des Étrangers*,' he heard her saying in her hard, rather metallic voice, 'and since the company in the main restaurant seemed rather—mixed, I insisted that we should have a private room. Martin grumbled at the expense, but of course I had my way. I insisted, too, on his ordering champagne, and although he selfishly said he would prefer whisky and soda I made him drink a glass of wine before we began supper. My wisdom in choosing champagne was immediately justified, for my husband became better tempered almost at once.'

('Resigned to his fate,' growled Mr. Hoyer to himself.) 'Yes?' he prompted her aloud.

But this time he failed to elicit an immediate response.

'I cannot quite remember what happened next,' Mrs. Joyce-Secretan complained presently. 'It is very curious. I remember having supper with my husband at the *Café des Étrangers*, and then—— Oh, it's absurd, but the next thing I recall is finding myself *here*!'

'Oh, come, come,' said Mr. Hoyer. 'There must be something else you can remember. Let's try working back again. You sat down to supper. You had champagne to drink. Now, what did you eat?'

She frowned thoughtfully.

'There was a clear soup,' she said, a moment later. 'And

then—yes, there was cold chicken. After that—oh, I *can't* remember.' Her voice was almost tearful now.

'There must have been a sweet,' Mr. Hoyer assisted her. 'Or at any rate a savoury.'

'I can't remember, I tell you!' she snapped back peevishly.

'And what does it matter, anyhow?'

'It matters a great deal,' Mr. Hoyer persisted. 'Let's go back again to what you *can* remember. That chicken, for instance. Do you recall actually eating it?'

'Yes, distinctly.'

'What joint did you have?'

'A wing, and some of the breast,' she told him without hesitation.

'I see. And your husband?'

'I did not notice particularly,' she answered carelessly.

'The other wing, I expect, and—oh, what does it matter?'

'I want, if possible, to discover the very last moment you remember being in London,' Mr. Hoyer explained. 'Now then, picture yourself eating that chicken. Did you finish your portion?'

'Every bit of it. I was very hungry.'

'Good! Now, when you had finished, did the waiter remove your plates?'

'Let me see. No, I cannot remember him doing so. In fact—yes, I remember complaining to my husband of the slow service. We were kept waiting for some minutes after we had eaten our chicken. In fact—' Mrs. Joyce-Secretan broke off, looking a little confused.

'Yes?'

'It was childish of us, of course, and perhaps a little vulgar, but I happened to notice the wish-bone lying on my husband's plate, and to pass the time I picked it up and

pulled it with him. A stupid, *bourgeois* thing to do, of course, but as we were quite alone . . .

A staggering thought surged into Mr. Hoyer's overtaxed brain. Once again he felt his hair rising on his head.

'Yes, yes !' he exclaimed intently. 'Never mind that, my dear madam. Tell me, now : did you actually pull this wish-bone with your husband ?'

'I'm afraid I did. As a matter of fact, it is the last thing I remember doing. A foolish, vulgar superstition ! As if securing the larger half of that absurd bone could possibly grant one a wish ! I really don't know what came over me—'

'Stop !' cried Mr. Hoyer, his voice tense with excitement. You pulled this wish-bone with your husband, and after that you remember nothing. *Nothing at all ?*

She looked at him intently. 'I think I was wiping my fingers on my napkin— Why, look ! Here is my napkin !' And she pointed tremulously to the square of figured linen which had been clutched in her hand when Mr. Hoyer first saw her.

Mr. Hoyer gasped, and swore under his breath.

'God save my wicked soul !' he muttered once again. But then, with a pertinacity that did him credit, he relentlessly returned to the point that was troubling him so sorely.

'You pulled the wish-bone,' he repeated firmly, striving to keep his voice under control. 'Now, think very carefully, please. Can you by any chance call to mind which of you—won the pull ?'

'Oh, yes—my husband won,' said Mrs. Joyce-Secretan. 'I can distinctly see him with the large part of the bone in his hand ; and he was obviously in a much better temper than he had been all the evening, for he closed his eyes and pretended to wish . . .

'But after that,' she added hysterically, 'the next thing I remember was finding myself here—in this *dreadful* place . . . What did you say its name is?'

'Timbuctoo,' Mr. Hoyer answered, very gravely indeed.

And that—believe me or not—would have been the end of this story had I allowed Mr. Hoyer to have his way. For quite a while he alternately ignored and pooh-pooh'd my indignant protests that the matter could not possibly be permitted to rest there. But at last, after a heated argument, he relented to the extent of asking me what more I wanted to know.

I gaped at him. 'Why, I want to know what happened next, of course!' I exclaimed. 'I want to know what was the outcome of this amazing business. Did you wake up in the morning to find it was all a dream, or that the Governor's wine had been too strong for you? And, if not, then I want to know what happened to the lady. Bless me!—her appearance must have caused a tremendous sensation in Timbuctoo.'

But Mr. Hoyer shook his venerable white head, and a cunning glint came into his frosty eye.

'Oh, no,' he replied presently in his slow, deliberate tones. 'To tell the truth, she didn't stay long enough for anyone else to see her. Indeed, you are the very first person in whom I have confided this strange adventure.'

'Didn't stay long enough?' I repeated, badly perplexed. 'But, my dear Mr. Hoyer—How on earth—'

Mr. Hoyer levered himself rheumily out of his chair, and stretched his aged limbs as a preliminary to departing.

'The Café des Étrangers wasn't the only place where they had cold chickens,' he said, as he grasped my hand. 'Hens are common enough in Africa, you know. In fact, it so

happened that I had a cold chicken in my own meat-safe at that very time. Fortunately the wish-bone was still intact. I went and cut it off, and——'

'Yes?' I demanded breathlessly.

'I won,' said Mr. Hoye simply. 'I closed my eyes and wished, and when I opened them again Alice Joyce-Secretan had already gone. Not a trace of her to be seen, except——' He chuckled quietly.

'Yes?' I asked again.

'That table-napkin,' said Mr. Hoye. 'She left that behind, and I had it for years, but in the end it was eaten by white ants. Good afternoon to you!'

CORNHILL.

*Oh, loud above the people
The London bells are glad,
And steeple answers steeple
To maze a country lad.*

*So now the bells are crying
In valleys far and dim,
And set the meadows sighing
That do not sigh for him.*

STEPHEN CASEY.

SHADES.

BY MYRTLE JOHNSTON.

SHADOWS—they were only shadows. Strange that they should flicker before him in the darkness in this place so remote from all they had ever known! Outside, the extravagant moonlight glorifying air putrid with exhalations from the swamp beyond the half-breed Spanish village he already hated with a sick loathing; inside, the darkness, noisy with invisible, though tangible, insects, and those shadows passing and repassing. It was like an opium dream, only his opium dreams had never been so fantastic, or disturbed him with bitter emotion.

There was himself—the young man in riding breeches, his dark hair ruffled by the wind, and serious, wide eyes gazing from under his hand at—what? Richard could not see. He had not thought of that young man for years and yet there, suddenly and unmistakably, he rose confronting him. A fresh wind seemed to blow from him and stir the fetid atmosphere. Richard remembered those breeches—a bit old fashioned in cut these days, probably. He used to take a great deal of trouble to be well-dressed. He did not look like that now. How long ago must it have been? Sixteen years. He was twenty-six then. He looked fifty now, even with make up, and the powdered wig he wore for his mandoline serenade number with dust and grime was so nearly the colour of his own hair that it made things worse rather than better. And of course the dope hadn't improved either his appearance or his singing. Only last night—but he turned with a shudder away from last night.

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At twenty-six he had never thought of singing beyond a little training of his pleasant, light baritone just in case it should ever come in useful. But he could fence and box and was a good rider. He saw himself on Shamrock's back, reckless of life and limb, careering down a wooded slope, Hawk Canyon they called it. Had he really done that, and smiled while he galloped? That was young Peter Tancred on Starlight in hot pursuit—Peter, for whom he must have paid up close on two grand, counting poker debts. Old 'Smoky' Furniss had told him he was a fool and Peter another, but Peter was going to pay back as soon as ever he backed a winner, only they never did win. His face, with the familiar, gentle smile, was so vivid that Richard almost called out to him, 'Hallo, Pete! It's me—it's Dick!' But Peter passed on soundlessly and was gone, and besides he wouldn't know Richard now.

And there was old 'Smoky' himself, dressed up as a Red Indian, taking a childish enjoyment in looking as fierce as he could. He always loved dressing-up—'getting out of yourself,' he called it. Where was 'Smoky' now? Gone, all of them gone. He would never see them again. And still they came, the old faces, some blurred by time, some whose names he had forgotten, but each familiar as a fragment in the pattern of the past. Ah, what times those had been!

Suddenly, more clearly than any of them, with a clearness which made the reality a dream, he saw Viola. She was on her chestnut, Lightning, whom she loved less only than herself. Perhaps Lightning was the only creature in the world she ever loved. She bent low over his neck, her pale hair flying, while she laughed to herself secretively and silently, as if in an ecstasy only they two shared. But Viola was dead. Lightning had killed her; he had fallen with her. It had been very strange to see her lying quiet on the

wet grass. She was not quiet now. She jumped off Lightning, and stood calling to Richard, and in a moment his arms were round her. A tremor went through him to see her cling to him, the two heads, fair and dark, pressed close, and then their lips met. But Viola had never really kissed him. She had laughed at him. She would never tell him why she laughed.

So that was what he had been at twenty-six ! You seldom knew at the time. Probably he had thought himself quite different, but this was how he really had seemed—in happiness, in sorrow, in anger and in love. Women had implied to him that he was handsome, but he hadn't been completely sure. Now he knew that they were right. As for vigour and vitality, he had taken them for granted at a time when they made of him a king. Life was easy then, life was pleasant. He had been given his first leading part, and there was no reason, producers whispered, why a brilliant future should not be his. No reason indeed—no failure, no discouragement—merely what might be called a general slipping of everything, himself included.

Or was the reason to be found in that young face ? Did anything show there of a quality, or lack of a quality, which should have shunted the promising young actor somehow off his track, to fetch up in this barbarous lost corner of the Argentine ?

Now they were all drinking his health. He had done something noble, heroic, and had accepted from the State a position of great honour ; and now he and Viola were being married. They were leaving the church amid a cheering, waving crowd. But that was all a lie. He had never had Viola. She had laughed at him, and then she had died. And he was second tenor in a vaudeville troupe which played in barns and tents in places he had not known existed ;

and last night, being several degrees more drunk than usual, he had been pelted from the stage by a derisive, filthy and ignorant half-caste audience. It was all lies, lies, lies—

'Dirty pig, keep quiet, can't you?' came a Spanish bark from beside him.

'The young man—he is pretty,' murmured the fat woman on his left, and her chins wobbled.

It was nothing to them that the film was sixteen years old, blurred and torn, without coherence or continuity. A film of any kind was a rare excitement, and they sat spellbound until, in sympathy with the soundless cheering of the wedding crowd, they burst into uproarious applause.

It was sickening that they should watch him kiss Viola—awful that this record of his youth was still afloat, to batter about until it fell to pieces up and down all the remote, unsavoury backstreams of the world. And then his feeling changed. He wanted to stand up and call out to the crowd in the stinking hut: 'That's me you're yelling for—me, Richard Murtough! I may have been tight last night, but you've seen what I was. You'd have been dirt compared with me. I was strong and young, and I could act too. I made that film sixteen years ago, and they told me I'd end up on Broadway.'

Broadway!

Viola's face was on the screen again, in her wedding veil, with the little downward slant of her left eyelid he used to tease her about. Slowly she turned her head until her eyes looked straight into his, and then she smiled. The young bridegroom who was Richard Murtough too was smiling. Peter and 'Smoky'—they were all smiling, all laughing at him. He lurched to his feet and, stumbling over legs and crawling children, he fled out of the auditorium, away from the mocking, terrible shades.

THE SOURCE OF DEFOE.

BY A. E. SNODGRASS.

BUT for William Dampier the world might never have known *Robinson Crusoe*. His *Voyages* were to Daniel Defoe what Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Plutarch's *Lives* were to Shakespeare, or Widmann's sixteenth-century history of Dr. Johannes Faustus was to Goethe—teeming sources of inspiration.

This redounds supremely to Dampier's credit, for we could as lief spare *Cinderella* as *Crusoe*. Dr. Johnson would have it that the book was one of three which readers wished longer.

On the other side of the scales, however, the famous navigator fails to balance, for, through a disgruntled crew and his own lack of doggedness, he postponed the civilisation of Australia for half a century. He failed to grasp the prize when it was within his reach; yea, he actually saw the promised land and skirted its shores, only to scorn and reject it, and sail away a forlorn and beaten would-be conqueror.

Nevertheless, despite his weaknesses and failures, he was a highly remarkable man, this Dampier. His portrait in the National Portrait Gallery, painted by Thomas Murray at the instance of Sir Hans Sloane, is quite eloquent to the student of physiognomy, who sees delineated the imaginative powers of a Hamlet, the same dreaminess, melancholy, irresolution. A man who would let 'I cannot' wait upon 'I could,' hesitancy hinder purpose, obstacles trip up resolve;

a temperamental inability to take the tide of affairs at the flood which leads on to fortune.

Daring he had and hardship never daunted him, but half-heartedness and despondency always crippled his enterprises. His voyages round the world, when much of it was still a veiled mystery, gave him a sea knowledge unsurpassed by contemporary mariners. He was the finest sailor of his day, the best hydrographer and geographer, and his travels are to this hour, as Clark Russell, no mean authority, attests, 'foremost among the best-written and most interesting in the language.' One biographer indeed has held these books to be 'almost classical' in their illuminating portrayal of natural phenomena. But methinks 'tis better not to express too much.

Defoe was swift to perceive the literary and untrammelled qualities of this seaman, and he made good use of his discernment. Whether he actually met Dampier is in doubt and is of no consequence, but that he found matter in the mariner's tales of the sea and of strange lands afar to quicken his more gifted and decorative pen is revealed in the nautical passages in *Colonel Jack*, *Roxana*, *Moll Flanders*, *Captain Singleton*, and *Robinson Crusoe*.

One example may suffice. In the narrative of his first voyage round the world (1681-91) Dampier tells how in May, 1688, he was tempest-tossed in a canoe with eight men off the islands of Nicobar, north of Sumatra. If this extract does not read like an excerpt from *Robinson Crusoe* then there are no resemblances in literature.

'The evening of this 18th day was very dismal,' Dampier writes. 'The sky looked very black, being covered with dark clouds, the wind blew hard, and the seas ran high. The sea was already roaring in a white foam about us; a dark night coming on, and no land in sight to shelter

us, and our little ark in danger to be swallowed by every wave ; and, what was worst of all, none of us thought ourselves prepared for another world. The reader may better guess than I can express the confusion that we were all in. I had been in many eminent dangers before now, but the worst of them all was but a play-game in comparison with this.

'I must confess that I was in great conflicts of mind at this time. Other dangers came not upon me with such a leisurely and dreadful solemnity. A sudden skirmish or engagement, or so, was nothing when one's blood was up, and pushed forward with eager expectations. But here I had a lingering view of approaching death, and little or no hopes of escaping it ; and I must confess that my courage, which I had hitherto kept up, failed me here ; and I made very sad reflections on my former life, and looked back with horror and detestation on actions which before I disliked, but now I trembled at the remembrance of.

'I had long before this repented me of that roving course of my life, but never with such concern as now. I did also call to mind the many miraculous acts of God's providence towards me in the whole course of my life, of which kind I believe few men have met with the like. For all these I returned thanks in a peculiar manner, and this once more desired God's assistance, and composed my mind, as well as I could, in the hopes of it, and, as the event shewed, I was not disappointed of my hopes.'

The popular idea is that Defoe was beholden to Alexander Selkirk for the basic conception of Robinson Crusoe, and the notion is not erroneous ; but that does not discount his debt to Dampier, apart from the descriptive cues in the *Voyages*, for it was Dampier who discovered Selkirk on the island of Juan Fernandez and who brought him home to England for his adventure to be publicly talked about and marvelled at.

The finding of Selkirk occurred during Dampier's last journey across the oceans with Captain Woodes Rogers. Two privateers, the *Duke* and the *Duchess*, had been commissioned. The *Duke* was a vessel of 300 tons, carrying 30 guns and 170 men; the *Duchess* was 270 tons, had 26 guns, and 151 men were aboard.

The ships were financed by a number of speculative Bristol merchants under the ægis of Prince George of Denmark, Lord High Admiral, and were planned to cruise on the coasts of Peru and Mexico against the Queen's enemies, the French and the Spaniards. Everything was arranged in fine style, and a man-of-war, the *Hastings*, was allotted as convoy. Rogers held the chief command, Dampier being appointed pilot, a post in this instance of real distinction and authority and one which a man even of Dampier's pre-eminence as a world navigator could accept without any loss of dignity.

The voyage, begun in 1708 and ended in 1711, was as successful as it was romantic and eventful. The privateers returned with booty to the net value of £170,000. There were many eager hands to share in these profits, and what Dampier secured of the plunder, if anything, history does not disclose. The chief interest, however, is the connection with Selkirk.

Alexander Selkirk, or Selcraig, had been a wild lad, hailing from the Fifeshire village of Largo, who very early in life became fascinated by the sea. He disappeared for six years with some buccaneering gang, and then showed himself at his home only for a brief spell ere he was off again, this time with Dampier, who was making in the *St. George* his third long voyage (1703-7).

Selkirk was mate of the *Cinque Ports* which accompanied the *St. George*. Off the island of Juan Fernandez trouble

arose on the *Cinque Ports*. Selkirk was not the most amicable of seamen, and his captain, Stradling, was a corsair of the ferocious kidney that breeds mutiny out of tyranny. Violent scenes resulted in Selkirk electing to go ashore, and he and his effects were duly landed on the uninhabited island.

But while the boat was returning to the ship panic suddenly took hold of Selkirk. An hysterical dread of prospective loneliness overwhelmed him. He dashed into the surf and, with outstretched arms, implored to be taken aboard again. Stradling only laughed and the crew jeered—so *Crusoe* was born.

How he made shift for himself, 'the monarch of all he surveyed,' for four years and four months became a matter of combined fact and fiction. Woodes Rogers and Dampier in the *Duke* and the *Duchess* liberated him in 1709, and later he was given the command of a ship captured as a prize.

So luck was in his fated path, for the *Cinque Ports*, from which he was marooned, sank with nearly all hands off the American coast.

Back in England, Selkirk was accounted a hero. It is said that Defoe went to Bristol to interview him at the house there of Mrs. Damaris Daniel in St. James's Square. Steele certainly encountered him and filled a whole number of *The Englishman*, one of his many journalistic bantlings, with an account of the castaway's adventures. *Robinson Crusoe*, the outstanding work that sprang jointly from the tales of Dampier and of Selkirk and by the magic of Defoe's genius obscured them, was published in 1719.

It is not surprising that Dampier's published narratives of his voyages which put a girdle round the earth attracted the keen attention of such an eagle-eyed and prolific writer as Defoe. They are not only remarkable inherently but in the sense that seafaring and literary skill are the rarest of

allies. Born in 1652 at East Coker, near Yeovil in Somersetshire, Dampier, the son of a tenant farmer who died when William was ten years old, had but meagre educational grounding and he was barely seventeen when he was sailing to France and Newfoundland. His roving spirit, leading him into such an uneasy life, seems the antithesis of a temperament that could exert so illustrative and polished a pen. When he was not battling with the ardours of an existence before the mast, he was fighting in the Dutch War on board the *Royal Prince*, commanded by Sir Edward Sprague. He took part in two engagements and then fell sick and lingered near death's door for a long period. After recovery the sea summoned him again with insistent voice. He went to Jamaica to manage an estate, and next engaged himself as a common workman cutting logwood. Logwood was then a fresh discovery and its high value as a dye-wood made the trade a very profitable one. Logwood was worth £15 a ton.

Dampier had no qualms in joining the freebooters. He spent ten years in their turbulent company. He was, however, a poor buccaneer. Piracy was not to his taste. He was only a half-hearted villain and he never entered into the more brutal phases of the life of the sea-hawks. He often expressed abhorrence of the men with whom he associated, though it cannot be accounted to his grace that he was not averse to sharing in the plunder that accrued.

He was a born strolling philosopher, a close observer and lover of Nature, a man, as Coleridge says, of 'exquisite refinement of mind.' What a bundle indeed of deep-seated contradictions! He wrote his books amid the drunken turmoil of his shipmates, describing with artistic and meticulous detail some rare tree, plant, exquisite flower, or curious fish between the sacking of a village and the looting

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of a wine shop. Did he ever pass an hour without fetching out his precious notebook? The wonder is that he ever wrote a line. Life aboard ship with a tribe of savage, dissolute, untamed buccaneers must often have been very akin to hell let loose.

*'Fifteen men on a dead man's chest,
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest,
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!'*

His failure effectually to discover the great continent of Australia is another chapter in a wild and varied career which was always so near and yet so far from supreme achievement. He reached Australia in the *Roebuck*, and territory there on the north-western seaboard is called after him, but he bit only on the hard, uncouth rind of the fruit, and left the juice and the richness thereof untasted and untouched.

This voyage in his Majesty's ship *Roebuck* began in 1699 under the patronage of the Earl of Pembroke, Lord High Admiral, the Earl of Orford, one of the principal Lords of the Admiralty, and many other exalted persons. The launching of the enterprise proves the high esteem which attached to Dampier in consequence of his first voyage round the world. His aim now was to explore the mysteries of Terra Australis, only a corner of which was then known to the civilised world as New Holland. Evidently he had few doubts about the wonderful possibilities of this uncharted region. He had already written: 'New Holland is a very large tract of land. It is not yet determined whether it is an island or a main continent; but I am certain that it joins neither to Asia, Africa, nor America. This part of it we saw is all low even land with sandy banks against the sea.'

Originally he had intended to point the *Roebuck* westwards by Cape Horn, and if he had adhered to this scheme he would in all likelihood have struck the eastern coast of Australia and pre-dated the discoveries that came later to the hand and helm of Captain James Cook.

The stars ruled otherwise. He had vivid memories of the cold of Tierra del Fuego, and in a weak, halting moment he chose to voyage to New Holland by way of the Cape of Good Hope. Whatever good hopes he had of momentous revelations this decision completely shattered them. He roamed unavailingly for weeks the inhospitable shores of north-western Australia, and saw nothing save arid territory, until at last, disappointed and disconsolate, with a crew stricken with scurvy, he turned his back on El Dorado and steered for New Guinea with the flag of 'Failure' at his masthead. His theories were sound enough, but we had to wait for Cook to confirm and consolidate them.

The voyage of the *Roebuck*, inaugurated with such trumpeting, to which Pepys and John Evelyn added their bugle notes, terminated in a blank sheet of accomplishment. The *Roebuck* itself foundered off the island of Ascension and the castaways were brought home in English men-of-war.

Dampier was very conscious of his defeated purpose, and writing of it he pleaded in extenuation that 'proper judges of these sort of performances will allow that I have delivered many things new in themselves, capable of affording much instruction to such as meditate future discoveries, and which in other respects may be of great utility to the present age and to posterity.'

The last days of Dampier were spent on shore, probably in a minor position in the Customs. He died in London, aged 63, in March, 1715. His will, dated November 29, 1714, describes him as 'diseased and weak of body' but of

'sound and perfect mind.' Nine-tenths of his property went to his cousin, Grace Mercer, of London, spinster; the remainder to his 'Brother, George Dampier, of Porton, near Breadport, Dorset, gentleman.' The will is preserved at Somerset House, but the value of the property is not stated.

Those best qualified to judge have extolled William Dampier as the 'Cook of his age.' Nelson and Horne gave high commendation to his volumes, and Admiral Burney, one of Cook's shipmates, declared that 'it is not easy to name another voyager or traveller who has given more useful information to the world in a style perfectly unassuming and free from the most distant appearance of invention.'

Yet as an explorer posterity finds him wanting. His pulse beat too hotly at the start of his expeditions and too languidly towards the end. He was too contemplative to be bold. But he was an Englishman with many of the sterling qualities the designation implies, and, strange to say, the French, the Dutch, and even the Spaniards have deemed that his own country has scarcely done him justice.

The world, however, can forgive him all his shortcomings if so be his writings prompted Defoe to give us *Robinson Crusoe*.

EYES UNTO THE HILLS.

BY HUGH IRELAND.

I.

THE Stelvio, which has enjoyed the prestige and romance of the highest pass in Europe until the opening of the Col de l'Iséran in the French Alps last autumn, has long exercised a peculiar fascination upon my mind. The melody of its name, the grandeur of its surroundings, the audacity of its conception and the distinction of its altitude have combined to give it a charm of its own. And I have recognised, without thoroughly analysing, the drama which is inherent in its approach from the north.

But it was not until a few days ago, when I sat at the feet of a master metaphysician, that the full significance of that drama flashed into my understanding. I should like to offer to share it with you, for if you have not already seen it (with your spiritual as well as your physical eyes) it may give you a permanent addition to your storehouse of ideas. And that is one of the gifts that bless like the quality of mercy.

The talk was about those false mental cul-de-sacs which claim to terrify our mortal minds, and my friend was saying how often we have to take courage to carry on right to the end of them before the outlet can come into view. You know what I mean—the feeling that we have come to the end and that there can be no way out, when in fact we have not come to the end and there is a way out which will appear in its own time. Who was it who said his life had

been a series of disasters none of which had ever happened ? His meaning was the same.

At that point in the conversation the memory-picture of the north side of the Stelvio suddenly burst upon me. It came hopping into my mind with the gay assurance of the psalmist's 'little hills,' followed by the realisation that this is indeed one of God's hills in which it pleaseth Him to dwell, and from whence cometh my help. Let me tell you.

There are moments of enchantment when any view looks better than its best, and it was at one such that I was privileged to approach the Stelvio for the first time. We had driven all the way from the far end of Lake Garda under a blazing July sun, and the Venosta valley had been dusty as well as hot. So our spirits seemed almost flagging when we caught our first reviving glimpse of the Ortler's splendid snows, and took our left-hand turning off the main road at Spondigna.

Then it was, with the shadows lengthening towards evening, that the narrow Val di Trafoi cast its magic spell upon us, and we saw what is not to be seen at noonday.

The solemn still pines were whispering together in the mysterious half-lights, though there was neither speech nor language, while the Solda torrent, spuming down beside the road, fresh from the glaciers, so cooled and moistened the air that we could almost hear the drip from the trees of raindrops which had not fallen. Our parched throats felt refreshed, and we seemed to be swimming upstream, like unhurried salmon, through the water-green light of the gorge, which held all the secretive attraction of the half-seen, until the valley suddenly opened out and the trees withdrew themselves up the steep mountain sides on either hand, disclosing a small 'prairie' of beflowered grassy slopes

with Trafoi itself, almost too small to be called a village, lying cosily in the middle.

Seen so, at dusk, with the warm light of summer sunset illuminating its setting of peaks and glaciers, Trafoi forms a picture of transcendent loveliness. I wish you could see it.

To your left, below the downward-sloping alpine pasture, the river has dropped out of sight in the depths of its narrow ravine. Beyond it the pines mount steeply, in tier upon stately tier, until their topmost ranks stand silhouetted against the lower slopes of the Trafoi glacier, which plunges in a graceful sweep to a level lower than that at which you are standing. Behind it rests a great rocky buttress, past which the Ortler glacier projects in a corresponding curve to the very floor of the valley, while high above the trees in the left-hand corner of the picture the summit of the Ortler itself, all covered in immaculate snow, reaches upward in serene splendour to catch the last glow from the west.

At almost equal altitude the skyline of virgin snowfields swings in a great cirque right across the background, in the centre the glorious Madatsch glacier falling in a nearly vertical precipice of ice, whilst to your right this tremendous backcloth is dominated by the dark pyramid of the rocky Madatsch peak, whose lower slopes are cut by the diagonal of the pine-clad side of the valley in the middle distance. Up the grassy foreground leads the road, holding its steady gradient through the little village, until it forms a 'lacet' behind a group of chalets and finally disappears into the pines which come down to meet it from the right.

As your eye sweeps round this pageant of beauty, almost overwhelming in its majesty, yet telling of peace, security and the love of its Creator which you may feel enfolding

you more closely, perhaps, in this remote serenity than in many a temple made with hands, you are left wondering how it can be possible for any carriage-way to climb out of such a colossal cul-de-sac.

But when early bedtime comes in the little hotel you may sleep happy in the clean mountain air because your map assures you that there is a way out which will show itself to-morrow when you have approached more closely. Even so shall I sleep in future, full of gratitude to the mountains, when facing one of those problems in life which only seem to hold no solution because I am not yet near enough to see it. If the climb proves steep that is only to be expected.

Early next day, on that occasion, as though to point the simile still further, the valley was filled with swirling mists; but the weather-prophets of the village said they would disappear before ten o'clock, and sure enough they did. Once again then I looked at that awe-inspiring semicircle of ten-thousand-foot summits with their reluctant wisps of cloud still clinging here and there, and remembering that the road itself (wherever it might be!) rises to more than nine thousand, I wondered for the last time what could be in store.

In the 'hairpin' as we left the village I remember dropping down to first gear (it was a small car) and on that we rested content to climb all the fourteen kilometres to the summit, the slow progress imposed by the gradient giving us leisure to admire glimpses of the Ortler through the trees, and the alpine flowers by the way. It was not until half the distance had been traversed through the pines that we suddenly rose clear of the tree-line, and found that we had come round the shoulder to our right at a spot which had not been visible from Trafoi the night before. We had found our way out.

Then at last we could see the road ahead—the classic final ascent to the top of the pass.

The sight fairly took my breath away. As a road the thing is almost unbelievable. The foreshortening of photographs already seen had not prepared me for that astonishing zig-zag which climbs the precipitous-looking rock wall to the very skyline, just to the right of the great Madatsch peak and only a little less high, looking rather like the emergency-stairway clinging to the back of some fantastic skyscraper. One could only marvel at the audacity which had conceived, a century ago, of flinging a carriage road up such a declivity, for the numberless 'lacets' are piled one above another so nearly vertically that great buttresses of masonry have to support almost every corner, and each one is very sharp.

Such was our way. But it is kept in such fine condition, the parapet so clean-cut and substantial, and the width is so reassuring that we felt no vertigo, and the character of the place brings out the best qualities of consideration in every driver.

Up and up we went, stopping to admire the gentians here and there, till Trafoi which had seemed so high after the low roads the day before had been left far below in forgotten depths, and we felt on nodding terms with the peaks on our left, all their ice and snow glittering in the dazzling sunshine. Nearing the summit the way had been cut through great drifts of snow, standing in walls ten and twelve feet high at the corners; and then, suddenly, the gradient ceased and we were at the top.

What a wonderful sensation it is to be there! You can't help glowing with a sense of achievement, until you remember that the credit belongs to those who made the road and built your car. But you may claim the satisfaction of a

splendid experience, and of finding yourself at last on the roof of the world, which cannot fail to make you feel uplifted. The view is open to you all round the compass, downward in every direction save one, and though there may be a few people on skis nearby to make you forget that summer's longest day is already past, you will take the deepest breath you have ever taken in your life, and may even recall with a thrill that perfectly real wild bears were seen up hereabouts not long ago.

To tell of the long descent to Bormio on the other side would risk an anticlimax, for the drama has been played ; but the soldanellas nodding to you on your right would charm your eye again, and a well-named torrent, the Braulio, leaps down beside your road with such gay abandon that you may go forward, when the time comes, still with expectation.

So I will leave you at the summit ; and next time I am facing a mental cul-de-sac I shall think again of Trafoi with its hidden outlet, and draw strength from the Stelvio. It has given me a new key to the psalmist's meaning. May the idea help you too.

II.

When I think of hills, picturing to myself, for example, the beauty of those which you may cross on the road from Rabat to Meknes in Morocco when they are wearing their April mantle of wild flowers which excel our choicest garden blooms and present a pageant of loveliness almost incredible, I feel compelled to question whether it is merely a form of mental greediness that still makes me love the mountains more. Is it just the childish desire for the biggest chocolate in the box ? Trying to be honest I refute this self-accu-

sation, and maintain the justice of my greater love. For what might not the psalmist have said if he had seen the Alps? It is not only that unattainable peaks symbolise all our elusive aspirations—the great picture of the artist's dream that will never quite come down to canvas, the poem which seems to evade the grasp of mere words, the melody which can only haunt some inner consciousness. That alone is a gift beyond the hills' capacity. But there is something more; it is that the mountains compel respect. They refuse to accept excuses. And so reverence, an essential part of love, is added to tip the scale.

A friend used to say to me: 'Never make excuses.' He himself lived up to his motto, for at the head of a great commercial enterprise in a 'far-flung outpost of Empire' he would act on his own decisions and only ask head-office approval when the fun was all over. He never prolonged it by excuses even if the event appeared to call for them. But such hardihood will not work with mountains. If you make a mistake you must pay for it on the nail, nine times out of ten.

The tenth, I suspect, occurred to me on the Izoard Pass some years ago. To this day my memory smarts under the accusation of a French omnibus driver who told me loudly and clearly, before about twenty people, that I did not know how to drive in the mountains. At the time, with indignation white hot, it never entered my head that any blame could attach to me. But as the seasons have gone by, and such a lovely stock of fresh experiences has been added to the Alpine and other sections of my mental storehouse, a tiny doubt, like a worm i' the bud, has crept into the picture to ask if the busman, in fact, were not right and I wrong. If so, the mountains let me off, and I owe them a debt of deepest gratitude. Can I state the case impartially?

We had been enjoying a short stay at La Grave, near the top of the Col du Lautaret, after a glorious drive from greedy Belley by way of the Col du Chat and Lac Bourget, over the three passes of the Chartreuse, and up the lovely Romanche valley from Grenoble. I hope you know La Grave, for I should take so long telling you about it that there would be no time left for the Izoard. It was my first love thirty years ago, and no Alpine village has ever displaced it in my affection.

We had been very happy there, revelling in the air and the view, finding edelweiss on the lower slopes of the majestic Meije, and watching alpinists and avalanches from Les Terrasses, until our last day came and we gave ourselves the treat of driving to the summit of the Galibier, second in altitude at that time only to the Stelvio itself. The historic old road was unchallenged then, and the experience was one to tempt any pen, but that again is not the tale I am trying to tell.

It was on the descent, when we reversed our tracks, that the chill of fear first clutched at our hearts, for we suddenly came upon the scene of an accident that had occurred only a few moments earlier. A powerful touring car, the latest darling of a famous factory, in the skilled hands of its tester, had cut things too fine in passing a lorry on the narrow road with its friable unprotected edge, and plunged down the mountain-side, which took no excuses. Astonishingly, driver and mechanic had escaped unscathed; nor did the proud machine lying twisted on the rocks below present such a grim spectacle as the blood and broken glass of a collision on the fast level, but it gave us, as our chauffeur would have said if we had had one, a turn.

So it was in somewhat chastened mood, with a fresh reminder of the dangers of our favourite game, that we ran

over the Lautaret again the next morning on our southward way, pausing to notice that the wreck still lay high to our left on the flank of the Galibier, awaiting rescue. How brave we all pretended to be ! But in truth we were nervous about the Izoard, having heard awe-inspiring accounts of its precipices, and a secret anxiety was gnawing at my mind lest, for once, vertigo might attack me whilst driving.

The Izoard climb starts with an unpretentious turn in the streets of Briançon, and as we rose above the forts the ravine on our right soon assumed a dark profundity as of the bottomless pit. But our road carried on straightforwardly on the higher ground over a number of kilometres of steady gradient until suddenly, in a tiny village, it took a sharp turn to the right, up a steep, narrow, dirty street. Then, after a few hundred yards of stiff collar-work under the broiling August sun, the air began to freshen, and we found ourselves ascending a smiling pastoral upper valley whose end appeared to be closed by a tree-curtained precipice.

How well I remember the fragrance of those pines as we entered their welcome shade and found our road zigzagging up what was not quite a precipice after all, but an ideal picnic place, all green grass, lichened rocks, yellow alpines and cool vistas.

The top of the pass, close upon eight thousand feet above sea-level (there are not many higher in Europe), rises clear of the trees, and is approached from this north side by a comfortable grassy slope with rock peaks on either hand, and a refuge in the middle. Napoleon himself made provision in his will for its building, with others on the great roads which his vision had created. So our long second-speed climb ended peacefully, and we congratulated ourselves on having found nothing alarming in it, but rather

the undiluted joy of a clean ascent by pleasant paths to the gateway of a new world.

We jumped out of the car to look back at the way we had come, and what a magnificent prospect it is ! No lesser adjective can do it justice. Below you the road twists and turns like a white snake, seeking the easiest course up the rolling slopes of the plateau which is bounded by the blue depths of the valley, whilst in the distance range upon range of the great peaks of Dauphiné are sketched round the horizon with all the delicacy of pastel.

Then comes that thrilling moment, renewed at the top of every pass and constituting so much of its charm, when you turn again and look forward, to see, at last, what is on the other side. For in the very nature of things these high watersheds mark immemorial distinctions between one valley and another which even modern transport is slow to smooth out, and in the case of those whose roads run north and south there is the added contrast furnished by nature itself, for the shady side is green and moist and brightened by warm-coloured flowers, like the dryas and alpine rose, whilst the other, more arid at the higher altitudes, is relieved by the cool touch of campanulas, violas and gentians on its sun-baked slopes. Would that a modern psalmist would sing of the alpine flowers ! Surely they are more lovely than those of the hills ?

Looking south from the Izoard summit you realise how high you are standing, for you see the gradual fall of the ranges away from the giant peaks at your back. The secluded Queyras valley (another favourite of mine) which marks the foot of the pass is too far below you to be visible. You look clean over everything to Monte Viso in Italy as you fill your lungs with the sparkling air which always seems to be moving gently at that enchanted spot where the road,

for a moment, is level. How joyfully we drank it all in !

But scarcely had we started the descent than all our dark forebodings of the morning came fluttering back like ill-omened bats, for we suddenly saw, rough-lettered in red on a piece of board stuck in a cranny of the rock by the roadside, the fateful words : ' Fièvre Aphteuse.' They laid a chill hand on our happy hearts, though their meaning was obscure to us. It seemed unpleasantly evident that some epidemic must be raging in the valleys below, and that we were warned to turn back. There was nobody to ask, for we had the whole visible world to ourselves. But illness was inconceivable at our pure altitude, and to turn back the last thing we wished, so we carried on, hoping for the best.

Nerves, however, were keyed up again, and the Casse Déserte did nothing to relieve the tension. For there is something weird about that tremendous scree which we soon had to cross. Its angle is so steep that the great mass of loose stones has the appearance of sliding downwards, piling itself against the backs of the strangely shaped rocks which project like tortured logs in a cataract. The natives call them ' Gendarmes,' but they look more like hobgoblins. Our road, narrow and innocent of parapet, seemed no more than a casual scratch across this insecure incline, and we held our breath until we were safely over, feeling that if anyone sneezed the whole mountain might start to slide down upon us. Indeed, so fantastic is the spot that the next time I crossed it I stopped the car half-way and stepped out, to assure myself by the feel of the solid ground, and by picking gentians, that the whole thing was not a nightmare. It was only thus that my fear of the place was finally exorcised.

Picture then the further shock to our rapidly vibrating systems when we found ourselves confronted, just round the

second blind corner, by an ancient char-a-banc, functioning uncertainly on some local service, crowded with peasantry, struggling upwards with steaming radiator, and apparently occupying the entire width of the road.

It was the last thing we had expected, for we had been assured in advance that we would not meet an 'Autocar' on the narrow part of the road at that time of day.

Pulling up instantly I signalled the disreputable old vehicle to stop and let me reverse up the gradient to a 'garage,' as the wider passing-places are called, to allow it to go by. But to my horror the driver of the juggernaut, evidently afraid that if he once stopped he might never succeed in restarting, kept relentlessly on without giving me a chance to carry out my charitable intention. Or was it simply that it did not occur to him that a foreign amateur was really proposing to reverse a hundred yards on such a road? Anyhow, in the twinkling of an eye he was upon us.

Realising his fell determination I edged to the last inch against the vertical rock wall on my right (having, by the mercy of Providence, the inner berth) and sat tight, hoping against the evidence of my eyes that he could clear us.

An instant later, as his front axle drew level with ours he yelled: 'Avancez!' He must have thought it possible for the two machines to pass on that narrow ledge by means of some kind of waltzing half-turn. But that was precisely what I was unwilling to risk, knowing full well that if his back axle touched mine the result would be disastrous to our relative fragility. So I remained where I was with beating heart, while the great coach, its every passenger screaming in terror, shied back from the extreme edge where the mountain side fell away at a vertiginous angle, and crunched into the side of our car.

Thank God they had not gone over! But there we were,

tightly wedged together on the verge of a precipice, miles from help, and more than seven thousand feet up one of the stiffest and wildest passes in Europe.

Something had to be done about it, and the first difficulty was to get out of our car, for with the jagged rock-wall on our right and the towering coach on our left we might as well have been in a crevasse. Ultimately I clambered out over the windscreen and bonnet, with such lack of dignity that the driver of the decrepit bus, feeling public opinion behind him, elected to become abusive and blame me (as I have said) for his predicament, which seemed to me unjust. Ignoring him, however, my first action was to scotch the char-a-banc with a large rock, for its whole weight appeared to be resting on my steering-gear. It had wedged itself somehow behind my left front wheel, and the full strain was passing through the steering tie-rod to the other front wheel which was butting solidly against the unmoved mountain.

This first tension relaxed, the next business was to persuade my friend the enemy that it would be more expedient to get ourselves out of the mess than to argue about how it had happened. He agreed in time, his passengers veering to my side of the argument, and after half an hour's co-operation we succeeded in extricating our machines from their reluctant embrace, which might have reminded a disinterested onlooker of that embarrassing dance known as the Paul Jones.

Our back axle and steering gear were intact, and with no further damage than the crushed running-board and back wing I heaved a sigh of relief. The bus-passengers showed a marked reluctance to continue their journey, but as they had remained petrified in their seats after the first shock, the driver had the whip hand and gave them no choice.

We for our part felt the utmost willingness to leave that grim scene.

But we were not allowed to relax for long. Hardly had we drawn breath before we came upon another of those ominous red notices about the 'Fièvre Aphteuse,' which we had forgotten in the stress of more imminent dangers. Fearing the worst now, but more than ever determined not to turn back, we crept on for another ten kilometres or so, winding our way slowly down through the beautiful deserted upper valleys, and it was not until we reached the first outpost of some sort of civilisation, with evening drawing on, that we encountered a strange-looking, dirty little man by the roadside. Him we accosted, begging brokenly for an interpretation of the fever notices.

To our chagrin the unattractive creature immediately burst into uproarious laughter, which so doubled up his already bent back that it was some moments before he could stammer, with a queer local accent and outstretched finger ridiculing our long white faces :

'Ça c'est une maladie des bestiaux ! Pas des gens !'

So at last it dawned upon us that the thing must be foot-and-mouth disease, and we too were able to laugh, for the first time that afternoon. It did us good.

In fairness to the Izoard I would like to admit that these experiences were solely the result of our own mis-thinking, for I have been over it twice since, and I love it. It is one of the most romantic and inspiring of all the passes of the Alps, best seen in the other direction, from south to north, and you should not miss it on any account.

Honesty also compels the further admission that I can see, now, that even in that remote spot I ought to have risked my axle in order to reduce the risk which the bus-driver's apparently rash manœuvre entailed for his passengers. The

fact that my own intention had offered the less spectacular but safer solution had evidently made me stubborn. It is so easy to resent being run into when one's own car is at a standstill and the other driver could well stop if he would. But the mountains have helped me to learn that resentment is never justifiable, for what would my British unwillingness to be bullied have availed my heart if the coach-load of innocent French peasants had been hurled to their deaths?

That is why I remain reverently grateful to my mountains. It seems clear now that they forgave me a moment's selfishness that day, and were generous to us all.

MAN OVERBOARD !

BY CHARLES KENNETT.

THE winter was at its height, and, loaded only with ballast the *Dollar Princess* was high in the water. The Western Ocean behaved itself for the first ten days, but, when nearing approximately 30° West, she encountered one of the worst gales the North Atlantic had to show. She was shipping seas clean over the bows. The *Princess* took one sea slap on her fo'c'sle-head. The helmsman held her head on to the giant combers. Occasionally, above the shrieking of the wind in the stays and rigging, could be heard the hiss of the combers. The skipper and the first and second mates were in the wheelhouse beside the helmsman. Suddenly the first mate shouted.

'Duck !'

Ahead was a wall of green. There was a rending crash as the windows of the wheel-house gave before that tremendous inrush of water and the wheel-house was filled with three feet of swirling, rushing sea.

She seemed to be going down and down. The engines throbbed madly and then stopped. The binnacle and telomotor gear had saved the helmsman from flying glass, but the three officers were all slightly cut about the face and hands.

The Captain, grasping the engine-room telegraph, asked what the matter was down below. As he spoke the engines throbbed once more to life, and the *Princess*, with a final wriggle of her whole frame, met the next comber with a proud uplift of her forefoot.

Through the howling of the gale it had been impossible to hear anything of what was happening on deck. The wings of the bridge were untenable, and the second mate, who was actually on watch, had had to take cover in the wheel-house with the Captain and first mate.

The water swirled out of the wheel-house, leaving a bare six inches covering the floor, when a white faced bos'n with streaming oilskins, burst in to say that two of the relieving watch, in making their way from the quarters aft to the wheel-house, had, in spite of the life-line rigged from stern to amidships, been swept overboard into the raging Atlantic.

The gale was blowing, according to the Captain's estimate, at about seventy miles per hour, but two men were lying astern perhaps with life left in them, and the *Dollar Princess* had to be turned. Taking firm grip of the binnacle, the Captain gave the order.

'Hard to starboard.'

'Hard a' starboard it is, sir, and steady as she goes,' repeated the helmsman, putting the wheel hard over.

The formula he used was far from being applicable to the movements of the *Princess*, as she slowly swung away from the gale and the full force of the wind struck her broadside on. She heeled over until, high as her rails were through being in ballast, her starboard rails touched the water. Anxiously the skipper looked at the pendulum in the chart-room through the aperture just behind the helmsman's head. Would she hold or would she go? The ship was leaning over at an angle of 60 degrees, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the helmsman kept his hands on the spokes of the wheel. Slowly she came round. 'Ease her helm,' said the skipper. The helmsman eased 15 degrees.

'Hard aport.'

'Hard aport it is, sir, steady as she goes.'

Suddenly the wind was on the quarter, and the following seas behind smashed on the poop. The *Princess* was round. Now to look for the two unfortunates that had been left about two miles astern. All around were the white crests of the huge combers. Every man on the ship was warned by the bos'n to get up into the rigging and any other vantage-point and scour the seas. All the ship's officers with their binoculars searched. It seemed impossible in that angry sea, even if they were sighted, for them to be rescued. Suddenly Chips, who had scrambled well above the crow's nest, was seen gesticulating wildly. Was it possible that any man could live in that raging sea? It was quite impossible to hear what Chips was shouting in that howling gale, but the first mate, fighting his way down the ladder from the bridge, climbed up beside the bos'n, foot by foot. Watching the sea with his binoculars, he perceived one of the two men who had been swept overboard, riding the crests of the waves. With the bos'n gripping his waist he semaphored orders to the bridge.

'North, Twenty West,' said the skipper.

'North, Twenty West,' chanted the helmsman, omitting the 'sir' in the excitement of the moment.

Once more the *Princess* paid into wind, and heeling over at a drunken angle with the engines going full steam ahead, one moment out of the water, the next fully submerged, she staggered drunkenly to the spot.

The second mate, going out to the end of the bridge, kept an eye on the sea. Suddenly he held up his hand, and with the other released a lifebelt and sent it hissing into the sea. It burned a bright flame. Could the man reach it? He was obviously in an exhausted condition. Occasionally he rose on the crest of a roller. A cheer which

came from all throats, reached the bridge, as he was seen to struggle into the belt. He was safe for the time being, providing the numbing cold of the Western Ocean did not put an end to his battle for life.

It seemed impossible to lower a boat in that awful tempest, but the Captain, going to the end of the bridge, beckoned all hands to come to the Captain's quarters, and when he called for volunteers to man one of the boats, there was not a man of the forty-eight-odd on board, even including the ship's cook, who did not clamour to go. A conference between the Captain and the Chief Engineer resulted in a pipe being run out from the fuel which was carried, and oil was soon pouring on the sea. It had the effect of breaking down the foamy crests, which every now and then enveloped, the man in the lifebelt.

Then came the lowering of the boat. Every man was equipped with a life-line, which he was to cast off as soon as the boat hit the water. The first boat down, which was being carefully lowered on the leeward side, was smashed to atoms as the *Princess* gave a sickening lurch. Twelve men were struggling in the water, liable to be dashed to pieces against the steel plates of the ship's side. They were hauled to safety by their comrades by means of the life-lines attached to them, but three of them were badly bruised.

Another boat was got ready and this time, with the Captain on the end of the bridge watching the slow descent ; inch by inch she was lowered, while the crew staved her off from the rolling side. She was barely two feet from the water when the Captain gave the signal to clear the falls, and she hit the water. At the same time he rang the engine telegraph 'full speed ahead,' and with orders to the helmsman 'Hard a' starboard,' she slowly swung round, and protected the lifeboat as far as possible from the full

fury of the gale. Could she live in that sea? It seemed an impossibility and yet slowly, with the men straining at the oars, she cleared the intervening seven hundred yards from where the sailor was still bravely battling. It was with relief the crew saw two men lean over the side of the lifeboat and haul the practically unconscious sailor—who had been in the water nearly two hours—back once more to comparative safety.

Then came the job of getting the boat aboard. It seemed an impossible task, and after various fruitless attempts, it was decided to let the boat go and save the lives of the men in it. One by one, as she swung perilously close to the plunging and rolling *Princess*, the men grasped the lifelines thrown to them, and though battered against the side, they were hauled once more on deck. The boat carried no doctor, but the skipper soon had the rescued man between blankets, and after some hot brandy he opened his eyes.

As soon as the ship was once more pointed full into the gale, the wind and storm, having done its worst, began to quieten. With the flag at half-mast, one remaining lifeboat, with the wheel-house wrecked, the pipes to the winches twisted and wrenched from their steel plates from the force of the gale and the heavy seas, the *Dollar Princess* limped into Cork Harbour.

BY THE WAY.

"ROLL up the map of Europe!" So said the dying Pitt; let none forget the inevitable, ultimate sequel—St. Helena.

* * *

The principal difficulty of any monthly commentator in these feverish days is not to find subjects upon which to comment, but to find some that will not have undergone a complete transformation between the date when he pens his observations and the date when they appear in print. There was a time when England was little affected by the views, and still less by the words, of others: she went her way serene in the possession of her stable soul. That time has passed—it may be, only for a while: all through the chequered story of the recent past, her ear has been unusually lent to the orations of the Continent, and in the process she has been besought by her advisers and mentors to 'keep calm.' Does she ever do anything else? Mark Twain in one of his humorous articles describes how a tyro edited an agricultural paper and amongst other paragraphs inserted one telling those whose clams were excitable to play music to them: it was a saddened, yet friendly, critic who informed him that the injunction was superfluous. The English never have been clams and are not now: but this they have in common with that bivalve—they do not need either music or adjurations to impress upon them the virtues of serenity; their failing is the converse—they (sometimes) need a big sharp pin to galvanize them into activity. That, let it be hoped, they have had now in sufficiency—and so an end to these anxious ear-strainings to our Continental actor-managers.

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And all the more may that now be so : March has seen many changes. The perplexing and tragic history of the Spanish war is virtually, if not entirely, at an end and though it is no doubt true that for two years at least that unhappy country has been the scene of an international war at all events it has not spread and now seems but little likely so to do. It may be ironic that the Nationalist leader has won by the aid of enforced foreign fighters, so much so that it was said—in jest, but how pointed !—that on entering one of his camps his first question was ‘ is there anyone here who can speak Spanish ? ’, but the long history of Spain can give no encouragement to any who have planned the continuance of such extraneous elements, and in public affairs gratitude is non-existent. Secondly Pius XI is succeeded by Pius XII, and thirdly—most significantly—with what a difference of note does all the world now speak of English strength ! As to that it need only be said that, in spite of Signor Gayda whose most striking quality is hardly a sense of humour, it means not aggression but exactly the reverse.

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‘ Hitler on Scapa Flow ’ : we were all cheered to see this announcement on a poster. Unfortunately he did not stay there.

* * *

‘ We cannot afford to overthrow the government of China. Bad as it is, anarchy will track its downfall, and the few elements of order which yet remain will be whelmed in a convulsive desolation.’

Japanese, take note—but be not too critical of the wording : the above was not written yesterday, it is the final paragraph of an article in the first issue of the CORNHILL, in January, 1860.

* * *

So *The Criterion* is dead : perhaps in that one more proof is given that the reading world, in bulk, either does not know the difference between good and bad or does not care. In its place we are to have, from a different origin and under different auspices, a magazine entitled *Poetry*, edited by Tambimuttu and Anthony Dickins ; the latter sounds less exotic than the former, but we are told that both 'are interested only in *achievement* in the mode of expression called poetry' and that 'every form of *honest* thought will be given a clear voice on this poets' platform.' The two words in italics—the Editor's italics, not ours—would seem to rule out a number of those youths whose work is already selected, so we are told, to appear : achievement is a big word, honesty is not a growth of every mind.

* * *

The glories of the Whigs are gone—*eheu, fugaces* indeed, when a man could say, and with all sincerity, that he thought he could 'rub along on £40,000 a year'—but Lord David Cecil has made a brilliant attempt to recapture them in his *The Young Melbourne* (Constable, 10s. n.). Few men, who, after so much had been expected of them, had done so little up to and even well into middle age, can have risen to the highest offices of State in the way of William Lamb, Lord Melbourne—but it is not of his public and late distinction but of his private and youthful experiences that Lord David Cecil writes. And the unusual biographical scheme is most abundantly justified by its interest and charm. Here we have retold, with much new matter and from a new angle, the extraordinary story of William Lamb's wife, Lady Caroline, and Byron—and for once Byron is truthfully represented as he really was : here also we have a picture of life in the great Whig houses as it was at the beginning

of the nineteenth century. This is more than a fresh and attractive picture of bygone ways and of an old and yet ever-new scandal : it is one of the freshest, one of the most attractive biographies in the language. I defy anyone to put it down half-read.

* * *

Many, however, have been the books on Byron and also on Caroline Lamb. Their number is of course insignificant, and rightly insignificant, compared to those on Shakespeare. With the possible exception of Napoleon, I imagine about no man has a bigger literature gathered, and still the studies come. But hereafter all with a difference. It will be impossible in the future for anyone, from whatsoever angle he may approach the nation's poet, whether from that of biography or of literary criticism, to write without indebtedness, acknowledged or secret, to the late Edgar I. Fripp. The two volumes of his *Shakespeare : Man and Artist* (Oxford University Press, 38s. n.) are more than absorbing, more even than exhaustive—they are definitive. It is stated on the dust-cover—after the manner of publishers—that 'no lover or student of Shakespeare can afford to be without them' : and in this instance that statement represents the simple truth. The pages of Mr. Fripp's profound scholarship throw light on every feature and facet of Shakespeare's art and life. They are written moreover with such unusual sanity of judgment : where Shakespeare (like his great predecessor) nodded, the author candidly says so ; none of your uncritical idolatry here—and yet as a result Shakespeare emerges not merely the very great artist the whole world has for so long agreed to think him but also—a matter on which the world has not been quite so unanimous—as a very great man, admirable and lovable even as he was

admired and loved by the friends who knew him in the flesh. Here is an end to the 'dark mistress nonsense': here is our Shakespeare at last, man and artist, and in both England's best. An illuminating, engrossing pair of beautifully and abundantly illustrated volumes, worthy to be read and re-read, to be prized and to be loved.

* * *

It is always a pleasure in this age of mass-production both of goods and of thought to find a book which declines to be put into a group. Of such is Oliver Warner's *Uncle Lawrence* (Chatto & Windus, 5s. n.): this is a study, most delicately and sympathetically done, of the 'failure' of the family, whom Mr. Warner went to visit in his poverty in a cottage on Pelee, an island towards the western end of Lake Erie. Uncle Lawrence was overjoyed to see his nephew, one of his own blood, a visitor—and Mr. Warner brought new zest to his uncle's life by a gift of spectacles. That really is all: but it is an 'all' of such simplicity and grace as deserved the telling. It puts me in mind of some lines of my own, which appeared in these pages towards the end of 1937:—

*Praise to the lowly and the little known
Who never saw Earth's banners raised on high
As they went by,
Yet kept great store
Of faith, of love, of gladness!*

That, at any rate, is the burden, or rather the beauty, of Mr. Warner's little book.

* * *

And again, a book makes me record how invariable is the pleasure of meeting the unusual in literature as in life—provided only that it is not as it is now so apt to be, the

incomprehensible, the grotesque or the disgusting. John Pudney's work is none of these three things—though he is sometimes less easily intelligible than at others—but it is invariably unusual. His latest volume is *Uncle Arthur and other Stories* (Longmans, 7s. 6d. n.), and there is none of the nineteen stories in the collection which can be dismissed as usual. The two best, in my opinion, are *Uncle Arthur* and *Ethel and her Engine*, and Mr. Pudney at his best is very good indeed, but in every case he has a touch, and often more than a touch, of the unexpected or of phantasy or of an uncommon insight into the foibles or failings of to-day.

* * *

Wallace B. Nichols, as readers of CORNHILL—and many others—well know has a pretty taste in historical fiction: his last full-length novel in that vein was concerned with the troublous life of Elizabeth Woodville and all the bitter feuds of the Wars of the Roses; his new one goes a little further back in English history. *The Dark Ride* (Ward Lock, 7s. 6d. n.), is the account of a secret mission undertaken by one Thomas Cledbury in the early days of the reign of Henry V, in the endeavour so to tie his hands by an English insurrection as to prevent his invasion of France. These were stirring times and Mr. Nichols well succeeds in conveying their uncertainties; but the story as a whole falls perhaps between two stools—there is too much love-making for the adolescent, too little delineation of character for the adult. A pleasant enough story, well begun and well ended, but hardly equal to Mr. Nichols's admirable best.

G.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 186.

PRIZES of books to the value of £1, from John Murray's catalogue, are offered to the two solvers whose letters are first opened. Answers containing the coupon from page iv, must be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, 50 Albemarle Street, W.1, and must reach him by 30th April.

for no lonely bird would sing
 Into his hollow ear from woods forlorn,
 Nor ——— nor solitary thorn ;

1. O sweetheart ! what is this
 ——— there so cold ?
2. You say there is no substance here,
 ——— great reality above :
 Back from that void I shrink in fear
 And child-like hide myself in love :
3. And the need of a ——— of men for me.
4. O many and many a young girl for me is pining,
 ——— her locks of gold to the cold wind free,
5. Fear ——— not the waves that roll ?
 No : in charmed bowl we swim.

Answer to Acrostic 184, February number : 'Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow ; Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now' (Tennyson : 'In Memoriam'). 1. GatherinG (Keats : 'To Autumn'). 2. ErnE (James Clarence Mangan : 'Dark Rosaleen'). 3. NooN (Browning : 'Thus the Mayne glideth'). 4. TrenT (Michael Drayton : 'Sirena'). 5. LulLaby ('A Midsummer Night's Dream'). 6. EvE (Browning : 'In a Gondola').

The first correct answers opened were sent by Mr. Colleyns, 200 Vaughan Road, Harrow, and Miss Todhunter, Riverdene, Bourne End, Bucks, who are invited to choose books as mentioned above. N.B.—Sources need not be given.

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